

Shaykh Nazim-al Qibrisi succeeded Abdullah ad-Daghestani, a Grandshaykh of the Naqshbandiyya Tariqat of Sufis, studying with him for thirty years.

The Shaykhs of the Naqshbandiyya Tariqat are the successors of the Khwadjagan, or "Masters." The tariqat takes its name from Khwadjah Bahauddin Naqshband and traces its lineage through Abu-Bakr as-Siddiq, the first Caliph of Islam to Muhammad, and from him to Allah Almighty.

This book is taken from talks given in English by Shaykh Nazim to his American murids in Damascus. The talks are from notes taken during his years with Shaykh Abdullah ad-Daghestani.

MERCY OCEANS

*The teachings of
Maulana Abdullah al-Faizi ad-Daghestani*

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“Follow in the path of him who has turned
to Me with love.”

—Quran (Luqman, 15)

These are the teachings of our grandshaykh, Maulana Abdullah al-Faizi ad-Daghestani (may Allah be pleased with him), as told to us by our shaykh, Muhammed Nazim Adil al-Qibrisi (may Allah be pleased with him). May Allah Almighty grant us the power to take benefit from these words.

“Alhamdulillah Rabbil Alameen, la hawla
walla quwatta illah billah il Aliyyul Adheem,
al-Fatiha. . .”

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PART ONE

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Islam is founded on three pillars. The first is BELIEF, the second is ACTIONS, and the third pillar is one's character—or ATTRIBUTES.

BELIEF—The heart believes what the mind denies. This must be understood first of all or else there is no Islam. It is useless to base, or balance one's faith on the level of the mind, which doubts anything that it cannot experience through the senses.

ACTIONS—A believer must act with love. Love for Allah Almighty, and His Prophet, and his Shaykh. In his actions, a believer must imitate, or copy the behavior of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his shaykh, submitting all aspects of his life to them. There can be no 'secret departments' in his life. He must, at all times, and in every situation, behave as if he were in their presence.

ATTRIBUTES—Quran tells us that there are not two hearts within the human breast. We may be slaves to our nafs, to our ego's desires, or we may serve our Lord. The character of a servant of Allah is such that he is humble. He always considers himself to be in need to his Lord, to be weak and insufficient before his Lord, not puffed up with knowledge and self-importance.

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Our Grandshaykh says, "We must believe that there are two nations of the sons of Adam living now, imprisoned behind a great wall built by Dhul-Qarnain. In front of this wall, Allah Almighty has put great mountains of ice . . . unapproachable. These imprisoned nations, the Gog and Magog people, by Allah's will shall be released at the coming of a new star of great heat. They will quickly run out, eating everything softer than stones and drinking rivers and lakes. They will stay on the world until the Last Day, when the trumpet blows. Then all will die and the mountains will be leveled. Stones will be reduced to sand by terrible earthquakes. Afterwards, for forty years, there will be no life on earth.

..... Resurrection Day: Allah Almighty sends his rain. This rain is the sperm of man. For forty days it will rain and soak into the ground. Seventy arm lengths of water will cover the earth. It is written in hadith that all the bodies of people will be destroyed except for one piece of bone—one cell.

This one cell will be like the egg cell of a woman, and it will be fertilized by this rain. From it, all bodies will come back to life, growing as in our mother's womb, and soon becoming as they were on the day they died. Only a few bodies, such as those of the prophets, will not experience this destruction and rebirth, but will, instead, be Divinely protected.

On the second blowing of the trumpet, by Israphael, the bodies lying in the graves will receive their individual souls, their human nature. They will then be alive, waiting in their graves. The Prophet (peace be upon him) will come up first. Gabrael is waiting for him to come to judgment. Rasul-ullah (peace be upon him) sits up, brushing the dust from his beard, and asks, first of all, "Ma ba Ummati? (What about my nation?)"

"O—Muhammad, don't be afraid," replies Gabrael. "They are waiting in their graves; waiting for you to command! You were the first to come up, and authority is given to you for your nation."

Then the Prophet (peace be upon him) gives permission for all people to come up. Seventy people will try to crowd onto one square foot. There is darkness—no sun, no moon. The people are naked, hungry, and thirsty. No one can see another, they have risen to they know not what. It is a fearful day.

Immediately, the Prophet (peace be upon him) will give the light of Iman to each person, according to their faith. The minimum light will be like the end of the thumb, flickering on and off.

Then, from all directions, the people will be gathered on one plain for the judgment. That will be on the plain of Damas, and the balance will be set on the mountain (Jabal Qasum). (At this, the shaykh points to a spot directly in front of him in the Masjid of Abdullah Daghestani and says, "Right here!") Al-Kursi (the throne of our Lord) will be on the site where today are the graves of two of the Prophet's wives in Damascus.

The full story of the Judgment cannot be told now. It is so long that its telling would last until the actual event.

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This description has a relationship to knowledge as a map has to a real country. Many secrets are being kept for later. Our Grandshaykh says that many secrets of Quran cannot be told now without raising vehement objections from the Great Ones.

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Hadith says, "The way to Paradise is filled with many things that our nafs will never like. The way to Hell, on the other hand, is full-up with our desires and pleasures."

It was once a very cold day in Damascus at the time of the morning prayer (fajr). Grandshaykh said to the people who had gathered at the mosque, "Since you have been patient, here in the cold, for the sake of your Lord, Allah Almighty will send the heat of hell fifty-years distance towards you. This is for your one minute of patience!"

Patience is fighting all that the nafs like. There are three types of patience:

The first type of patience is patience with physical discomforts—such as getting up on cold mornings for prayer, having cold water for washing, waiting in line, being uncomfortable during illness, completing difficult tasks, and so forth. To remain patient and to be steadfast in your worship in spite of these difficulties is very valuable in the sight of Allah.

The second type of patience is even more valuable, and that is the patience to refrain from forbidden things. When you look at a woman, for example, say, "O—my nafs! This is my sister! How can I look at her with bad eyes?" About this kind of patience there is a hadith: "To live as a servant and to keep away from forbidden things is more valuable than all the worship of all the angels, men, and jinn throughout the ages!"

The third type of patience is the best of all. It is to be patient with the people who trouble you. Quran relates: You must carry some of you with others of you. We are trying some of you with others of you."

(Quran)

Patience is a most necessary thing in the life of a man. If a man has hold of patience, all goodness is with him. Allah's eyes are on you . . . will you be patient?

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Smoking is unlovely to Allah!

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The pole star is fixed with all other stars revolving around it. The Qutb is fixed with all the other saints revolving around him also. The Qutb is the Sultan of the Awliya, the real Caliph and representative of Allah on earth. This is the highest rank among the saints. The orders of the Qutb are the orders of Allah, and his will is the equivalent of Allah's will. Why? It is because he is no longer subject to his nafs' desires. Only Allah's Will is with him. There are no hobbies with him, only Allah's Work. Only this kind of man can be a wali (saint).

It is very difficult to stay on the throne of the pole star. Our Grandshaykh spoke of one wali who stayed on that throne for forty years, unsurpassed by any other saint. This is a sign of great 'spiritual poverty,' and from this 'poverty' come his words. These words are unchanging laws. He was our Grandshaykh's Shaykh, and this is his tradition coming to us.

He said, "If anyone doesn't consider death and the hereafter at least four times a day, his faith is too weak to build upon. To consider death makes the soul free to contact its heavenly station and Divine Powers."

What is the meaning of death? It is to be invisible in this world; to disappear from it and reappear in the Heavens. This is the meaning of death to the saints. Remembrance of that gives us more spiritual power. It is the reality of death. At the same moment we are living here, we are reaching there. When your spirit leaves your body, immediately it will be in its Heavenly station. Our soul is waiting, like a bird in a cage, to be free. It waits with endless desire for the time when it can fly to its Heavenly station.

When a man knows the truth of death he no longer fears it, but waits for it. This knowledge gives us love to reach our Heavenly home, and also a Way. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "The way to meet your Lord is death. If you don't like death, you don't want to meet your Lord!"

All real believers must, therefore, like death—for it is the way to the Heavens. Thinking of death gives more power to our faith. The love of God is the power of our faith, the spirit of our faith. If you haven't any love for Allah, then you cannot have any faith. It is impossible.

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Shaykh Abdullah said, "If one louse gets on your foot and you say to it, 'It's alright, it's only my foot'—soon you will find it, not on your foot, but in the hair on your head!"

In the light of this saying, we must know that there are two kinds of people. Good people will show mercy and tolerance to all. Those of bad character, on the other hand, are pleased to see others miserable. They give trouble to everyone. Bad people come to good people and say, "Let us be your doorkeepers." When good people accept them (saying, "Alright, it doesn't matter"), the bad ones usurp all that the good people have.

You must be very careful. Never tolerate evil or give it any authority. (Iran, for example, allowed Khomeini to return—and then—finished.) It is like giving permission to snakes and scorpions to live in your house. Democracy allows its enemies to work within its borders. Quran says, "Do not trust those who are not of your faith, character, or way." Even if a man is a Muslim—if he doesn't think and feel like you, don't trust him.

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Hadith says, "The best work is knowledge of Allah. That is the best occupation for a man." This Hadith is like an ocean, for Quran says, "O my people, I am with you—all the time—everywhere." He is always with us. This is knowledge.

Our Grandshaykh says, "If a man is not aware that Allah's eyes are with him everywhere, all the time, that man is not a mu'min (believer)." You must imagine, in your heart, that Allah's eyes are with you. If you forget this you will be absent from your Lord, and when you are absent from your Lord you will be present with your nafs (ego). The best actions come by holding this in your mind. *"Oh—my Lord, why am I writing this? I am writing for you."*

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What is the minimum degree of faith that we must keep in the presence of Allah? Our Grandshaykh says to us that the minimum faith is the same amount that we promised to Allah Almighty on the Day of Promise before coming to this world. That minimum faith would be enough to keep the remembrance of Allah while alone on a desert island with a beautiful girl. How can one have such faith? What if she were your sister? Your daughter?

Iman (faith) means purity, and faith never lives in a dirty place or in a dirty heart. In the light of this hadith, we must move so that we will be living with people who are always with their Lord. Otherwise we are still living with snakes and scorpions.

Iman must be forever—no exceptions.

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Our Grandshaykh said that all prophets and saints came only to call people to the buildings of their Heavenly stations, and to advise them how to do so. They don't care if a man lives in a cave or a palace, in this life, because everyone eventually ends in the grave.

The place to build for yourself is in Heaven. As hadith says, "O—people, as much as you stay in this life you must work for it. And as much as you will stay in the next life you also must work for it." This life is temporary. The next life is eternal. Therefore, working for eternal life must be unlimited. When we are working toward our heavenly stations, it gives us endless pleasure and satisfaction—endless pleasure for the heart of man.

In this age people are contrary to this point, giving all their energies to working for the things of this world. This is the source of all trouble and unhappiness of our time. How can a man be happy in this life when his desires and demands are endless? People want the whole ocean when they can have only one drop. How can they be happy?

I watched the young people in London. They looked like little fish with their mouths open wanting to swallow all the world—all the girls—all the good things. They run here and there, and in the end the world swallows them. That is the life of this world and it is empty. A man may live in Paris for forty years visiting the cafes and theatres every night. Then he comes here and sits with us. Would you believe that he swallowed all of Paris? No. Paris is still there without him. There is always a bigger fish to swallow the little ones.

If a man acts according to his senses, he will be wrong. If he acts according to his mind, he will be right. A man living for this world—wasting his body, money, and life—will tire and die without any benefit to himself. But a man using his mind will take benefit from this life, building home, family, and business from which he will take eternal benefit.

When a man is thirsty he imagines he drinks all the rivers and springs, yet one glass is enough. Why do you wish to drink all the rivers and springs? You may fall in from too much drinking!

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Another important subject from our Grandshaykh—I am asking for more power to explain this lesson clearly to you:

Allah Almighty sends his Prophets with miracles and extraordinary happenings as people ask for signs of prophethood before they are willing to believe. The most famous miracle of our Prophet (peace be upon him) was the night journey from Mecca to Jerusalem to the Heavens and back again—the Miraj. We must believe it as Allah tells us this in the Quran. We must believe it in our hearts. "Be right, as you have been ordered!" says the Quran.

Allah Almighty called Muhammad (peace be upon him) to His Divine presence, and the Prophet (peace be upon him) went as ordered, just as a dignitary is received by the Queen of England. This extreme honor and respect was not given to any other creature. Muhammad (peace be upon him) would never have received this honor for himself alone. He told Gabriel, "If this is only for me, I have no need of it. I will receive it only if it is also for my nation!"

Gabriel replied, "O—Muhammad, if your nation is on the same steps as you (sunnah), this invitation to the Divine Presence is also for them. But, unless they follow you, it will be impossible for them to come."

Thus, we have a promise from Allah Almighty to reach His Divine Presence following the footsteps of the Prophet (peace be upon him). This and nothing else is the highest aim for mankind. All religions and prophets came to ready man for this. It is like the bright preparations of a bride for her marriage.

All prophets had their Miraj, but none to the station of Muhammad (peace be upon him). When the great wali, Abu Yazid al-Bistami (may Allah grant him more honor) asked his Lord, "How can I come to you?" Allah Almighty answered, "Leave your nafs, and come!"

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Our Grandshaykh said that Allah Almighty called Muhammad (peace be upon him) twelve thousand times, inviting him to the Divine Presence, but only once did he speak of it. The

Prophet (peace be upon him) was not called for himself, but for two reasons:

The first reason was to receive good tidings for the sons of Adam (peace be upon him), as is related in the Quran. Allah swore, on His Divine Honor, to make the sons of Adam beings of high respect and honor, and spoke of this each time He called Muhammad (peace be upon him). This is an endless honor for men.

The second reason for which Rasul-ullah (peace be upon him) was called to his Lord's Presence was to receive authority and power to keep the sons of Adam from all evils and devils ("... as much power as you need to protect My servants!").

You are a man—we are all men—and men are known by their names. That one, for example, is named Tariq. We may further call him an American, a Muslim, a farmer. More descriptions give honor to a name, or, to put it another way, titles and names are the signs of his honor. We say that there is a reality, a wisdom, in Arabic that the more names a man has the greater his honor.

The names of Allah Almighty, says our Grandshaykh, can not be counted. He has as many names as all the atoms in the universe, as all the particles of all the atoms, down to the very last one. It is the sign of endless honor. He is the Creator. He knows each piece and its location. Can you understand the greatness of Allah Almighty? His beautiful names reach to the very last piece. He called Muhammad (peace be upon him) twelve thousand times to teach him these beautiful names, these names of honor. When the Prophet was sixty-three, these teachings were completed. He then went from this world into Allah's Presence forever... finished.

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Our Grandshaykh tells us that no one can have as much tolerance for mankind as Allah Almighty, Who said, each time He called the Prophet (peace be upon him), "O, Muhammad! Your nation is always sinning! They never tire of doing evil deeds! But I, their Lord, never tire of forgiving them! I am changing their bad deeds into good deeds!"

This is endless tolerance from Allah Almighty. He also told Muhammad (peace be upon him), "Anything you ask for your nation, I will give to you. I gave you ten Sahabas, each with a promise that they would enter paradise. At the end of time, with the last day approaching, I will give you a few

people of your nation with such saintliness that it will be ordered in Paradise to put on more lights and beauty to receive them! This, O, Muhammad, will be honor for you, as Paradise will be honored by them." Some kings are honored by palaces, while other kings may bring honor to a palace (There is an Arab saying: "The honor of a place is according to who is standing in it.") Among those for whom Paradise will take on more beauty are Mahdi (peace be upon him) and his viziers and ministers.

What is Allah preparing in Paradise for His believers? Our Grandshaykh described the holy lights of Paradise in this way: "Beauty there is represented by women of such radiance that if one stretched her hand to the sky, the light of the sun would be as nothing! The perfume scent of one of these Paradise-ladies would cause any man who breathes her fragrance to forget eating and drinking until he would die! When a mu'min puts his hand to her breast, she will give such sounds of pleasure as have never been heard on earth...."

"..... There is another Paradise above this. These endless beauty oceans are His Divine Presence. The first Paradise is just a drop. Whoever is interested in beauties will get that in Paradise, but the one who wishes the Divine Presence will get that. It is never open, but covered, because one single ray of Nur (light) small enough to pass through the eye of a needle would destroy the other paradise. These are the endless beauty oceans of Allah Almighty's Presence."

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"We believe there is a Face of Allah Almighty," says our Grandshaykh, "But, a description of His Face is not imagination. You may imagine one face, and he, another, and so on. If yours is right, what about ours? We cannot describe all the attributes of Allah Almighty, we just know that He has them."

The greatest pleasure, and the highest honor for mankind, is to be in the Divine Presence, looking at His Face. This honor is privately for the few that worship only Allah, asking nothing from this world or the next. Their heart is with their Lord; "I like you not for your palaces or gardens—I like You, only." This is the highest degree of worship, wherein one is not interested in worldly or spiritual pleasures. To place one of these worshipers in Paradise would be to put him in prison.

On the Judgment Day, Allah will order them to be taken to Paradise: "Take Tariq to Paradise!" He tells His angels.

But he escapes and returns. Then, the order comes, and he is bound in chains of light. Again he escapes, and says, "My Lord! I don't want these things; I want you!" Then, down upon him comes Nur and he disappears—gone into the Presence of Allah.

People like this know which thing is cheap and which thing is valuable. If they are shown a piece of glass and a diamond, they choose the diamond. How can anyone with a good mind choose to leave the Lord of the Universe? He is the Creator, the owner of all things. Accept the good He gives but in your heart always say, "Oh, my Lord, we are asking for You only."

Every Friday, in Paradise, Allah removes the veil from His Face. All the people there who chose Paradise instead of Him immediately quit whatever they are doing and look upon It. At that time there is no more sweetness or pleasure in anything else.

For those who wanted Him, however, they are before His Face eternally in His veiled Paradise beautified by the lights of His Beautiful Names, numerous as the smallest pieces of the universe, and bathed in the light of His Greatest Name. Each Name is an ocean of beauty and lightened pleasures, with countless private areas and secret mercies. The Greatest Name covers all.

Allah says, "O, Muhammad! All of this for your nation—for My people! Whoever believes in My Words, I shall give him this, and more!" And so, we believe more and more, respect one another, and give trouble to no one.

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It is not a fit way for people to behave, biting and kicking like wild animals. A hadith relates: "Who is a Muslim? A Muslim is he who gives harm to no one. Not with his hands nor with his tongue." This is a wide entrance to Islam, and it is for all people. The Prophet (peace be upon him) bears witness to this: It matters not which country or religion you come from, if you harm others you are not a real Muslim; you are with the animals in the stable.

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Maulana asks one of his murids, "Did you pay attention to what I just said? Don't tell me that you have heard all this before. Some things are suitable for using in more than one

place. The onion used in cooking goes well in many dishes. You don't say, 'No, I already used it for soup.' You may use it for salad also. You must always pay attention to all I am saying."

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Allah Almighty is greatest. He is timeless, ever ready, without beginning. He is king.

And yet you cannot find a king without a kingdom. Without subjects his kingship has no meaning. Just as there can be no meaning for a prophet without an ummah (nation). Therefore, Allah was ready without beginning, and his servants also were ready without beginning. If there were no people, to whom was He Allah? Was it to Himself? No! A hadith relates: "I was a secret treasure and wanted to be known." His people were part of this treasure.

He is God to His people, and to each of them He gave a private station in His Divine Presence. There we are always worshipping without need of eating, drinking, or marrying. It is a reward for the sons of Adam (peace be upon him). These Heavenly stations are fixed. When people come to this world, they have the appearance of beginning, but in reality they were with Allah always, without beginning. We come from Allah and return to Him. You cannot say that we are a part of Him. We are only an appearance of His power—no more. All things are an appearance of the attribute of power. He says, "Kun fu-yakun!" ("Be—and it is.") Thus, we have our realities in His Divine Presence. Now, in this world, we have only a representation of that reality. This body, and all things of this world, have their origin in the reality of the Divine Presence. We are like a photograph. We, ourselves, are not on the paper—only an image. A rocket is sent into space. Is the power that sent it here on earth, or there with the rocket? The power is here, though we may see that rocket going back and forth, seemingly on its own.

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Our Grandshaykh tells us more about the attributes of Muslims: "We are always in need of so many things. Some of these we can take with our own powers, our thinking and doing, while other things (most things in fact) are beyond us. In his nature, the human being is weak. It is not within our

power to reach everything we need. When we know that we are weak, we realize that we must depend on Him who is powerful—Allah Almighty.

It is good manners, therefore, for everyone, Muslims, and especially those of the tariqats, to ask for everything that they need from their Lord. Allah says, "O, my people! Ask Me for everything, even your shoelaces!" This is His order.

He knows best if something is suitable for us or not. When something is suitable for us He gives it. If it is not necessary, He doesn't. This is why we must ask Him for everything. You may ask a person for something and he may give it—not knowing that it may be harmful to you. You, yourself, may not know if a thing will be all right for you to keep or use, or if it is haram (poison, forbidden). If Allah gives you something, you know it is all right. If it is not good, He prevents.

A person must know how and from whom he is asking. Man may ask for things dangerous to himself. But, if you know that a thing is good for you, you must ask strongly—not half-asleep! You must be like a little boy, asking from his parents. He never ceases till they give him what he asks. When you have been given a thing by Allah, you must keep it and thank Him for it.

We live in a world where everyone is in need of each other. It may be that if we ask another person for something, Allah will put inspiration into his heart to give it or not. We must know, however, that it is Allah who is giving—sending us His servants. In everything Allah knows well, and looks for what is most suitable."

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Our Gandshaykh was the Sultan of the Awliya. Though he was illiterate, Allah Almighty gave to him 'ilma la dunni' from His Divine Knowledge. This is given only to those who fear and respect their Lord. The following is a saying of his:

"Now we are living in 'dunya,' afterwards, 'ahkira.' The reality of 'dunya' is 'fana,' or 'not existing.' The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, 'Allah never looks upon this world. If He did, it would stop!' Though Allah created this world, He never looks on it with love. This is because this world is only temporary. You may, for example, build fifteen water closets, but do you look upon this as being lovely? When Adam (peace be upon him) ate from the tree of knowledge,

his stomach started to churn. 'There is no water closet in Paradise,' Allah said. 'You must go down to dunya—there is a water closet for you!'

"In Quran, Allah tells Moses (peace be upon him), 'Look to the mountain. When his Lord revealed Himself to the mountain, the mountain came crashing down!' (Quran, sura A'faaf, VII-143)

"We are saying that the whole of the universe is less valuable than even one of the sons of Adam (peace be upon him). Thus, for our sake, Allah looks to us here, in this dunya, once a day. This world isn't valuable to Him, but the sons of Adam (peace be upon him) have endless value in His sight.

"Nowadays people have forgotten this. They all hold this world, this dunya, to be very valuable. For this dunya, they kill each other with a quarter's worth of lead! One of the pillars of Islam is to know the value of people and things. A Muslim's vision must be like his Lord's vision. We must treat each other with perfect love and respect. We must help each other, not quarrel over the things of this worthless world. Allah Almighty is 'Rabbil-alameen,' the Lord of the Universe, and all people are equal in His sight. They are all servants of their Lord whether they know it or not. All of us are living in His Mercy Oceans.

"As we said, Allah Almighty looks to this world once a day. The time He looks is from midnight until the adhan of fajr (the morning prayer). What is the reason He looks? It is to see what Iblis, the devil, is up to. Allah sees what dirt Satan has thrown on his servants during the day, and like a mother catching her dirty child after a day of playing, He washes away their dirt. With His endless mercy He washes away their bad deeds. Every night, for the honor of those awake and praying for forgiveness, Allah Almighty gives His mercy generally to all the sleeping ones. Every night Allah is destroying bad things and putting good things in their place. This is secret knowledge. Iblis never knows of it. If he knew that every night his doings were being destroyed, he would cease trying to deceive people."

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Grandshaykh says that for people living in the area of Damascus, Allah looks to them twice a day. If a man dies in Damascus with twenty-four thousand sins, Allah will turn them into twenty-four thousand good deeds. Damascus is a Holy area, the place of the Judgment Day, where twice a day come

Nur and mercy. This area covers all that a man can see from the minaret of the Masjid Umawi, and its baraka spreads for a distance of six days' camel ride in all directions. So great is the honor of this area that Grandshaykh once spoke of it for forty days!

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Since the time of Adam (peace be upon him), and up until the Last Day, Allah Almighty has given four great saints the task of governing and looking after the whole world. When one goes, another comes to take his place. Their decisions control kings and history.

Qutb al-Bilat is in control of all countries. Qutb Irshad sends everyone to their destinies. The Pole of the Poles is Qutb Aktab; he is responsible for the other Qutbs, and his spiritual body is in the Ka'aba. Qutb Mussarif is the 'treasurer.' He has the power to make everything in accordance with Allah's will.

These are secret titles, known only to the few who are holding them. They are unknown persons; perhaps the man pushing a cart in the market place is one of them! Allah Almighty leaves the sons of Adam (peace be upon him) almost completely in their care; only once a day does our Lord look to us to protect us from Satan.

Our Grandshaykh was the representative of the Prophet (peace be upon him) for his century. He tells us that there have been one hundred twenty-four thousand prophets from Adam (peace be upon him) up until the last prophet, Muhammad (peace be upon him). For every station there is a higher station. Allah Almighty says, "Over every learned man, there is a more learned man." Knowledge is an ocean without end; there is horizon after horizon. We must always remember that however much we know, there is someone who knows more. Always, we tend to put all knowledge within the limits of what we, ourselves, know. We must not make this mistake. There is no limit to knowledge, or searching.

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Our Grandshaykh says that Allah Almighty gives to those of His servants who are on the straight way divine knowledge to come to His Presence. Unless we follow that way, we cannot benefit from that divine help.

We must realize, for instance, that Allah Almighty gave us our bodies, our precious organs, to use only according to His desires. "Oh, my servants!" He says, "Do as I would like, not contrary to My desire!" When we use our bodies in ways that are not pleasing to our Lord, it is as if we are saying to Him, "I know, and You don't." We are, at that time, fighting with our Lord.

For example, Allah says to us, "Don't look at that which is haram (forbidden)." Our nafs (egos), on the other hand, say, "It is a pleasure to look. I know more than You!" In addition to looking, there are, of course, many ways in which we may use our bodies in rebellion to our Lord. When we do this, we say, "I am free! No one orders me!" Bad kufr (disbelief) begins with this.

We must, therefore, be very careful and never let our nafs command us. This is a very sensitive point. Your ego (your nafs) will make you a donkey for itself, riding you as it desires. There is a hadith: "Your nafs is your donkey! Don't be a donkey to your nafs!" The majority of people are donkeys for their nafs. It is worse when you are angry over something. When a man is angry, he is being ridden by his nafs, who happily call to Satan, "Come! Ride with me on this fellow!"

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We are listening to the words of our Grandshaykh, and it is very important to get all points accurately and correctly. Each has an essential part in our Islamic life; leave one out, and the whole will suffer.

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It is very difficult for our nafs to accept that we are servants of Allah. There is struggle. A hadith says that we are returning always from the lesser fights, which are for the things of this world (including wars), to the greater fights, which are to control our own egos. We must be very careful as our nafs will not leave us even for a moment. Our ego is not concerned with fighting for goodness. It claims instead to be our lord, and demands that we follow its wishes.

Nimrod, the king of Babylon, once built a great tower for fighting against Allah. Our Grandshaykh says that, unlike King Nimrod who only built his tower once, we are continually

building towers for fighting our Lord, until we finally surrender and become muslim.

Everyone knows fighting Allah, but almost no one knows fighting their nafs. A man who takes a sword and kills one million men is not brave. The brave one is he who fights his nafs. Everything your nafs says to do—do the opposite! This is fighting!

“Astaghfirullah!” This means asking forgiveness from your Lord, asking refuge in Him Almighty and from your ego’s claim to be king. “You can’t find one moment in which you don’t need to say ‘astaghfirullah,’ ” says our Grandshaykh. “You are always in need of this. Furthermore, it is highly recommended to give thanks to Allah Almighty two times with each breath!”

Rabia (may Allah be pleased with her) was a descendant of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and a great waliya. Once forty saints came to visit her. “O, my brothers!” she told them. “For each ‘astaghfirullah’ that we say, we need to say another until we overcome our nafs and nothing is left. Then, our ‘astaghfir’ will be all right. Otherwise, it is just our nafs that are saying ‘astaghfirullah!’”

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Our Grandshaykh relates a saying of Muhyiddin ‘ibn Arabi (may Allah be pleased with him):

“If they offered me all the treasures of this world, I would not give even one inch of my intestines!” To give such a thing may mean death for the giver. In that case, what value do this world’s treasures hold?

To be alive for one moment in which to speak one holy word, to do one sunnah, is more valuable than the treasure of the whole world. Our Grandshaykh says, “In the sight of Awliya, this is perfect respect for the Prophet (peace be upon him). They are ready to give all treasures for one sunnah. Muhyiddin is giving great respect to his Lord with this saying. This is a sign of a servant of Allah.”

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Here we are, sitting together. We are pleased with this, our meeting. If not, we would look for another. Each to his own group. Some like stalks, some like grain. Vultures, for example, like carrion, but not fresh meat. In the marketplace

there are thousands of shops. One person goes to this one, another goes to that one; not everyone to the same shop. If someone is not pleased with a group, he cannot sit with them. This is an unchanging law. Our class is a free market, one may stay and buy, or go. We are not angry if no one buys.

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We believe that Allah Almighty has endless powers, that those powers are absolute, and that He can do anything. He is not tied to reasons as we are, nor is He compelled to do anything. “It is a big lesson for us,” says our Grandshaykh, “that Allah Almighty has endless power—without means and reasons. He is not limited, like men, to the world of cause and effect. If a man wants to grow crops, he must have seed, and fertile ground, and rain. Allah has no need of anything. He created all the worlds in seven days. He says ‘BE,’ and it is. For what? To be a big lesson for us that we must not be in a big hurry to do a thing. We must be patient. It is for Allah to bring results quickly. For men, all things in this world come step by step. Wheat grows little by little by little, until the ear ripens. Nothing comes immediately. The sons of Adam (peace be upon him) reach their aim, their Divine stations, step by step.”

Allah says, “Whoever fights their nafs for Us will reach to Our Heavenly ways.” This means that you must be patient always, until you reach a point where your Lord will take care of you. It can be compared to what happens to a rocket when it reaches the edge of the earth’s gravitational pull. That rocket must spend huge amounts of power to reach that point, until suddenly it is free from gravity’s pull. Then it can travel easily. Likewise, until we cut the ‘gravity’ of our egos, it will be very difficult. We must be patient—spending so much energy—fighting until we can be free of our nafs’ hold. Then we may go more easily also.

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Our Grandshaykh says that Allah Almighty gave us very valuable organs, and asks us to use them as He orders. When we do this, we are riding our nafs. If not, our nafs are riding us. We must have patience to ride. Otherwise it is impossible!

How are we to use our organs? What is the balance, what

are the criteria against which we can observe and criticize our actions?

For every action, you may find three ways, or positions. These are called wajib, sunnah, and haram. We will illustrate these terms with some examples:

The top class of people are the Awliya, the Saints. They have, in their eyes, a divine light, a divine power, that burns away badness in those people upon whom they look. Because of this divine quality, they may look everywhere, at men or at women. It has been ordered for them to look. There is no prohibition for them. Therefore, their looking is 'wajib.'

For the second class of people, their looking is 'sunnah.' When one looks at a beautiful girl in this manner, he sees her as she would appear two years after her death! In this way, he can know what is temporary and what remains. He looks and learns, like a medical student looking at a cadaver.

For the third class of people, looking is prohibited—'haram.' This is because they are always present with their nafs. All bad powers come into action with their looking. It is on the same level as a donkey when he sees a mare.

What is music in Islam? It is haram, forbidden to listen to music that is arousing to the ego. How can you tell? If the heart goes to haram, it is haram!

Some people, on the other hand, when they listen to music are changing, looking at their incompleteness. This is a funny happening, and with it comes a very strong desire to complete one's self, to save one's self from incompleteness. This is Divine music, special music. We may say it is 'sunnah.'

There is also another class of people, those who *must* listen to music. The music of Jalaluddin Rumi (may Allah be pleased with him), for instance, was the opening to Divine knowledge. From it one could take a power to protect the nation of Muhammad (peace be upon him). This is 'wajib' music.

Originally, no action was prohibited. Prohibition came only after that action started leading away from Allah Almighty, and towards our nafs, our egos. This is a general law. As our Grandshaykh says, "I am giving you a balance and a base. You may now go anywhere, east or west, and not lose your way. In every action, you may find 'wajib,' 'sunnah,' and 'haram.' One man goes to a saloon to drink; it is haram. Another goes to take knowledge; it is sunnah. The third man goes to smash bottles; that is wajib!"

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Our Grandshaykh was telling us about our responsibilities, according to the Awliya:

"Every day," he said, "there are twenty-four thousand breaths, sixteen thousand movements and thirty thousand works for each person. On the Judgment Day, each of us will be questioned: 'What was your intention for each of those actions?' If you can reply to Allah Almighty, 'I was intending your pleasure,' this will be enough."

It is a clear hadith of our Prophet (peace be upon him): "I came to you with Shariah (laws, rules, methods) like the sun shining." We are, therefore, under heavy responsibility every moment. Either we are obedient servants, or we are not.

If a man is thinking this, how can he find time to find faults with others? You must always be thinking, "What will be my situation in the Divine Presence?" This makes for good character. It is a formula for human life, a base to build upon.

Allah Almighty says, "Your every action—your praying, working, living, and dying must be for Me only." This means that we must live and act and die in His way. We are sitting here for Allah Almighty, not for ourselves. To find fault with others is haram. It is a big sin to set oneself up as a judge of others. That is for Allah alone. He has no partners. When a man looks for another's faults, he is 'junub,' impure. He must quickly make ghusl (bath, major ablution) to be clean. Under this imposition he will be afraid to find fault with other people.

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The Grand Wali in these times, the keeper of this world, is Sayhih Buzaman (peace be upon him). He said, in the assembly of the Awliyyah, one word; one very important sentence. Our Grandshaykh repeated it as he heard: "The summary of all Holy Books, what is it? It is fear of God!"

If you have fear of God in your heart, you have the summary of all holy books. You will not leave any good action; you will do it! Also, if you have fear of God, you will not be able to do any bad deed. It is the main aim of all Holy Books to direct people in this way. What thing does man need to escape badness, and go to goodness? It is the fear of Allah in the heart. Without this he is like a wild animal.

Hadith tells us that in the last days few people will have the fear of Allah Almighty in their hearts. Animal nature will surface among us, and human nature will disappear.

Yet, from Allah come 'radio waves' to guide us to Him. He who has fear of Allah Almighty in his heart, he who believes in the Judgment Day and that Allah is Judge, he who believes that he will be asked to give account for his life—for his actions, that man will fear his Lord, and keep away from doing bad deeds; keep away from evils and devils!

If a man says, "I believe in Allah, but not in the Judgment Day," he has no fear of God in his heart. Now, in our time, devils are fighting to destroy Iman (faith) in Allah. If they are unable to destroy a man's belief in God's existence, then they will try to destroy his belief in the Judgment Day. If those devils succeed in doing that, it is the same as if they had destroyed belief in the first place. With no Judgment, there is no fear, no responsibility, and a man without responsibility is terrible. If you say to a wild tiger, "Goodness, Justice, Mercy," will he listen? A man without responsibility is worse!

In this way devils are now working against humanity and good character. Bad people are defending disbelief, fighting against believers. Show me one man who believes in Akhira (the life hereafter) doing bad things.

A man without conscience is dangerous, you must be very careful of him. The character of bad people is that they want all others to be like them. In badness, they are envious (hasad). Now, in our community, people are too much like this. They can't look on another person's goodness without wishing that it would go away. Envy! This is the worst character! Iman (faith) never lives with this!

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A hadith relates: "My Lord taught me all good manners." In Islam, manners are known as 'adab,' and he who keeps adab will bear the fruit of good character. It will seep through and permeate his being, as if he were an earthen vessel.

It is sunnah for a man to keep the adab of the Prophet (peace be upon him). "A man may make mistakes," says our Grandshaykh, "but if he keeps good manners, the Prophet (peace be upon him) will intercede for him. Therefore, good manners are a means for a man to gain intercession."

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"We must believe," says our Grandshaykh, "and, we must know that all of our actions, no matter how small or insignificant they may seem to us, are recorded by two angels sent

by Allah Almighty to observe our deeds here on earth." One angel sits on our right, and records our good deeds and words. The other sits on our left, and makes note of the bad things we do and say. We must know this.

On the Judgment Day each of us will be witness to the deeds of his or her life. Everything has been recorded like a cinema, and on that Day, Allah Almighty says, "Each person will see the good that he has done; even as small as the smallest atomic particle! Also, every bad deed will be seen, no matter how slight."

The Prophet (peace be upon him) says that for every person there will be a life record consisting of seventy rolls. Each roll will be as long as the eye can see. Nothing is hidden, and all can be seen at a glance. Allah Almighty will say, "Look at this man's actions! What is your judgment for him?" The 'film' is your own and you will be your judge. It will be exact justice! There can be no question of anything being left out as the two angels are with us always, recording all we say and do.

In addition, Allah and His Prophet (peace be upon him) each have a private book for us, one for every person. While the book written by the two angels is always open, the book of Allah is closed. It is opened only when a man is not occupied with this world, only when he is praying and working sincerely for his Lord. The book of the Prophet (peace be upon him) is opened for those servants who are keeping the sunnah, those who respect the Prophet (peace be upon him) in their hearts and in their actions.

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Once our Grandshaykh was sitting at dinner with his murids. It was a big feast, with rice and turkeys, so big that the people could not finish it all. Grandshaykh looked at all the food that was left over and called to one of his disciples, a man named Taseen Effendi. "Eat!" instructed our Grandshaykh. Taseen rolled up his sleeves and ate it all! All night, until one hour before fajr (the morning prayer), that murid stood in prayer without drawing a single breath!

Hudur: this means to lose oneself in the Divine Presence. to give your heart to that ocean! It is like a man taking off his clothes and diving into the sea! There are so many beautiful things that we cannot speak about. It is prohibited!

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From the sayings of our Grandshaykh, on the manners of the Sahaba (the companions of the Prophet, peace be upon him):

“Visiting is sunnah among the muslims. It is for the love of Allah, and for His sake and that of the Prophet (peace be upon him). Disciples of the Prophet (peace be upon him) always visited each other.”

“Assemblies amongst believers must be in mutual confidence, with no share for Satan. Iblis always searches for an opportunity to enter the assembly, but he should not be allowed to take part! This is an important point! Always, if two people are sitting together, he is trying to be the third!”

“What was the way of the Sahaba? When they were in assembly, they were using such a power that all the devils of creation, numbering to infinity, could not find a way to enter. The wall of power!”

“The Sahaba were all awakened people, not asleep. They never gave occasion to Iblis; not with their eyes, ears, tongues, hands, legs, noses, hearts, or thoughts. There wasn’t occasion for him.”

“If one party to an assembly gives way to Satan there will be trouble for all. Iblis is always coming to lead you, to ride you. You must take shelter with Allah Almighty or Satan will wound you, bind you, and take you as his slave. You must be careful to guard every moment. Allah is the shelter for you; be ready with Him, and the devil cannot approach.”

“Satan has arrows. The Prophet (peace be upon him) says, ‘They are poison arrows.’ If, for example, a man is looking at a forbidden thing, he is pierced by an arrow of Satan. A man who can’t refrain from looking to haram is not given the Divine Light for looking upon the Heavenly Universe. The eyes must be kept for Allah Almighty or He will not permit your heart to look upon the unseen worlds. If you can’t keep your eyes from haram, you will stay blind in this world and the other. You cannot attain the station of those who have learned the Heavenly looking.”

“The Awliya have eyes in their hearts. Allah says, ‘It is important for every Muslim, while in this life, to take Divine Light for looking to the Heavens.’ This is impossible for a man with the love of this life in his heart. It applies not only to men looking at women, but to any looking after this life.”

“Who prefers to have a picture in place of the original? This life is like an imagination, a photograph. The original life is in Akhira, the hereafter. That is the valuable thing, not

this dirty world! He who believes always prefers the eternal life to this dunya. A mu’min takes care with his actions, because he knows that whoever looks at this ‘photography,’ to this world, is prohibited from looking at the ‘original.’ ”

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We believe that Paradise and Hell are real. It is ‘Haqq,’ truth. Our Grandshaykh says, “I’m always surprised to hear people say, when told about Hell, ‘O, my Lord! Protect us from Hell.’ They ask the wrong thing. They should say, ‘O, my Lord! Protect us from bad actions, and reasons that would lead us to Hell!’ Don’t fear Hell, but your bad actions!”

A mu’min, a believer, must be awake to those things which are apt to make one fall into Hell. A person doing bad actions immediately has fire coming into his heart, burning there. He feels tormented, dark and troubled. He has fallen into Hell! Unable, therefore, to find pleasure within himself, he turns to the outer life, to the pleasures of this dunya. Thus, they are floundering around in search of pleasure—television, radios, discos, bars; they have fallen into Hell! Allah Almighty tells us that every time they come out of Hell a little bit, they are pushed back in!

There is not real pleasure for them. Real pleasure must come from the heart. A man may sit in Hell on a throne, but he will still have no happiness.

People’s bad characteristics bring all of Hell’s troubles into their lives. Worshipping, and good characteristics, on the other hand, will bring Paradise into their hearts. If a person has this, he may be put into prison and yet his soul will be free! Are you asking pleasure, or sorrow? It’s in your hands! Our Lord says, “Everyone must taste his own goodness and badness, even if it is as small as an atom.” Do you understand? You are free if you show mercy to all things. Mercy then comes to you. This lesson is enough to last a man his entire life. We must know, and we must act.

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Our Grandshaykh asks, “How do we know what is good, and what is bad?” He answers, “Allah Almighty is teaching all people. He created the sons of Adam (peace be upon him), and He sees that each one has a conscience.”

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "You must ask your conscience!" A mufti (judge) may give a verdict here on earth, but on the Last Day, you must be the judge for yourself. Allah Almighty has given all people a judge right here in their hearts. It is always saying, "Be on the straight way, as you have been ordered!"

People think Islam is like a coat; something you carry around with you and put on whenever you like. This is a mistake. Islam must be both inside and outside of you. It is a way of living, the best way, for it contains all things needed by the sons of Adam (peace be upon him). Whoever is asking happiness, Islam gives him light. It is the solution to all problems.

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Our Grandshaykh says, "For every believer, it is wajib (obligatory) to sacrifice, with his soul and with his life; to keep standing by Rasul-ullah (peace be upon him) and his ways, his sunnah. He must not leave them lying down. The Prophet (peace be upon him) brought the sunnah from Allah Almighty, to make it living, to bring the dead to life! For a man to sacrifice his life for the sake of one sunnah is not asking too much!

"What kind of benefit would you expect to take from a man who wouldn't sacrifice to keep the sunnah alive? None!"

"The sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is more valuable than our souls. We make our lives and our souls valuable only when we are willing to sacrifice them for it. Only then will Allah give us real life and a valuable soul. This is the way to reach real life!"

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How is a wife to receive her husband? Our Grandshaykh gives us Divine Knowledge on this subject:

"If a woman is smiling at her husband, Allah orders all Paradise to open for her to enter. For her, He especially prepares such a palace as was never before prepared. He will bestow blessings that have never before been bestowed! Why does Allah Almighty bestow such blessings? It is because when a wife smiles at her husband, she takes the whole day's troubles from his shoulders. It gives love between them, from her heart to his.

"Love is the reason to continue family life. If there is no love, the family separates. Therefore, Allah likes smiling faces.

It is a simple thing, but very important. Allah never likes hatred between husband and wife, or between mu'min.

"The Prophet (peace be upon him) said that a smile is a sadaka (charity) for everyone. Rasul-ullah (peace be upon him) came to increase the love between people; therefore we must do likewise. Don't behave differently with different people. Don't show a good face to one man, and a bad face to another. You must remember that we are all servants of Allah Almighty, and we have been ordered to do only goodness to each other. This is a unique attribute of man, it is not given to animals to smile or cry.

"In Paradise there are private sections for each person. When one does a good action, it appears in one of these sections as a bounty, or blessing. Paradise is filled with such bounties so much that there isn't an empty place to put a finger! Mu'min (the believer) will enjoy that abundance every moment, endlessly.

"However," continues our Grandshaykh, "if a woman receives her husband with an angry face, Allah will order his angels to shut Paradise, and will order Hell to burn hotter for her. Because of her anger, all the abundance of this life and the next are made haram for her. She must quickly turn and make repentance, before it is written in Allah's book!

"Angry looks cause her husband's heart to feel hatred for her. Even if she herself has troubles and is feeling miserable, she must receive her husband with a smile. For this, Allah will reward her by removing all her troubles. This is the secret that keeps the family strong.

"If the family is strong, the community is strong. Life can then proceed happily, with no troubles. Therefore, in Islam it is sunnah for wives to smile so that love can grow. A simple thing, but it carries great consequence."

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"Allah likes smiling people," says our Grandshaykh. "The highest degree for the human being is to smile at every event. It is one of the signs of Iman (faith) that may be seen in those who sit on the throne of the Awliya. It means that he is satisfied with the will of Allah Almighty, not fighting or coming opposite to Him."

Only a few people can reach this point; among millions only one or two will reach it. They are very rare, like rubies

among stones. Our Grandshaykh is teaching us little by little, directing us to that aim. It is very hard. One doesn't reach the summit of Everest on the first step! They who succeed are kings in the next life with private stations in paradise. No one can know what is in them. If one knew even a little, they would smile at every event, for every 'wrong' in this world! They would be pleased with everyone. If a man is pleased with everyone and everything, he is in Paradise now! It is difficult, but we must try. We must know that no pleasure or sorrow in this life can last, but will come to an end and pass away. There is, therefore, no need to dwell upon a sorrow, no need to hold it in the mind. When a sorrow comes have patience, and a pleasure will come as a result. It is difficult, but important, to be satisfied with Allah Almighty when there is sorrow and things are not to our liking.

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Our Grandshaykh says, "There is no jealousy in Paradise!" There is no character worse than jealousy. Iman (faith) cannot exist with jealousy. All sadness and troubles are a result of the envious. It is ugly between ordinary people, and even uglier between learned people. If there were no envy, people would be so pure as to shake hands with the angels!

Among children, the biggest will take everything for himself. When something is brought for the little ones, the older ones will try to take it away from them.

Envy is a veil over the heart. It comes between a man and his Lord. You may find jealousy among all peoples, everywhere. When a man becomes pure from envy, this veil is removed. At that moment he may look upon the Prophet (peace be upon him). It will be as if you were dreaming, but you will be awake and able to speak with him. He will appear in a spiritual body.

A sign of the end, of the last days, is envy. It is like psoriasis of the skin, leprosy. If you sit with one so afflicted, you may be affected also. That is why there are hospitals for them.

Now jealousy is spreading like fire among all people, all leaders, all learned men, even women. It is like an ocean. In it live all the bad characters. Even a single glassful of this ocean will support millions of death-causing bacteria. Iblis fell from grace for this 'hasad,' this jealousy. Cain and Abel knew all about envy. Everyone looking to another with jealousy will be thrown from Allah's mercy. As long as jealousy exists, there will be unrest in the heart.

Jealous people burn in this life with the fire of Hell. If there is a little jealousy, it will be a little fire. If there is a lot of jealousy, there is a big fire. For both, there will be no rest day or night.

Islam is fighting against this ocean of jealousy. It doesn't accept even the tiniest amount! Allah Almighty orders us to seek protection in Him from jealousy, to dry up that ocean so that all the bad characters in it will die. When it is dried up completely, then the Light of Iman will come to your heart.

Shaykh Muqtadee says, "Jealousy is when you ask for good things to go away from another person." For example, when a man gets a new car, the jealous person will wish for the car's owner to wreck it or drive it off a bridge. If the accident happens, the jealous man will gloat.

In the time of Moses (peace be upon him) there lived a very poor man. One day he asked Moses (peace be upon him) to pray to Allah to give him a cow. Moses (peace be upon him) agreed and asked his Lord to send that poor fellow his cow. Allah Almighty answered, "O, Moses! Tell that man to pray for his neighbor, and I shall give two cows, one for each of them!" So, Moses (peace be upon him) went back to the poor man and told him what Allah had said. "If my neighbor gets a cow," replied the indignant man, "then what would I want one for!"

This story shows us the nature of jealousy. That man wanted good things for himself alone. Not only did he not care for his neighbor's needs but he actually went out of his way to prevent the other man's happiness.

The first step towards Iman is to ask on behalf of everyone what you ask for yourself. There is no envy in Paradise. Envy is the fruit of the jealousy tree. Where this tree does not exist there can be no envy and, therefore, no bad character.

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Our Grandshaykh said that wives have three obligations to their husbands. Only these, and nothing more, can a man place upon them:

The first obligation is that she must be under her husband's will. She must be as his shadow, her likes and dislikes must be his likes and dislikes. When she acts contrary to her husband's will, she is not a wife in the sight of the Awliya.

Her second obligation is to be the keeper of his property. She must not spend without his permission even if he has

millions. If he gives permission, she may spend all of it. This is adab.

Thirdly, she must keep his honor when out of his presence. She must not sit with another man in her husband's absence, even his brother. When a man and a woman sit together alone, Satan is always the third party. In ancient times when a man knocked at the door, a woman would answer with her thumb in her mouth so as not to sound lovely.

Abu Muhammad al-Madani (may Allah be pleased with him) was the uncle of our Grandshaykh's shaykh, Sayyid Sharif ud'din Daghestani (may Allah be pleased with him), and a great wali in his own right. No one dared question him or raise their face to him, such was his majesty. And yet, he said that he would have preferred to have been a woman rather than a man! He said this because a woman has only these three responsibilities, and if she honored them, she would enter Paradise without any questions. A man, on the other hand, would be asked so many questions that he would wish he were dirt, let alone a woman! 'I say this because I am a weak servant,' said Abu Muhammad. 'If the husband is pleased with his wife, Allah is pleased.'

Nowadays, women are asking to be treated like men, wishing to bear the same heavy load. This is lack of wisdom. Women have the same chance as men for improvement in the Divine Presence, but they are created in a different way. Their inner lives are different. Men are hard and women are soft. 'Men are the controllers of women,' says Allah. The souls of men are the perfection of Allah, while the souls of women are the appearance of the beauty of Allah. 'Jamal,' 'Kamal,' 'Jalal'—beauty, perfection, and majesty . . .

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'What is the highest point of selfishness?' asks our Grandshaykh. 'It is egotism, and it is the worst character in a man. It means that such a man cannot carry anything contrary to his will. He must always do as he likes or he will be angry. There is no speaking against his opinion. He has no respect for the ideas of anyone else, and he won't admit that he is wrong.'

Ego is the attribute of Pharoah. It demands always to be chief, to dominate. It is the character of Satan, the worst character of the nafs, and the last to leave a man. The love of being chief! If there were only two people on earth, you would see it!

It is so difficult to rid a person of egotism. To conquer it is like trying to kill a snake, when the head is cut off the tail still wiggles! It is the aim of the tariqats, especially Naqshbandiyya, to eradicate this evil character.

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The Prophet (peace be upon him) never did anything without consulting Allah and the Sahaba (his companions). It is sunnah for us to do likewise. Our Grandshaykh tells us that no matter how clever a man may be, he is still in need of consultation.

Once, according to our Grandshaykh, a certain king was speaking with his grand vizier. 'Tell me,' asked the king, 'Why does a man need to consult with another? Doesn't he have eyes to see with, and a mind with which to decide what to do?'

'O, my king,' replied the vizier, 'While it is true that a man has eyes, it is also true that he can never use them to see himself. On that point, each of us is blind!'

We learn correctness quickly with consultation. Everyone must have a consultant, or 'mustashar.' We must also know that if a man wishes to follow on the footsteps of the Prophet (peace be upon him), he must have a shaykh. He must ask Allah to send him a teacher.

'What are the good characters of a consultant?' asks our Grandshaykh. 'You must be satisfied in your heart with his adab, his manners and mentality, and his din, his religious actions. The Prophet (peace be upon him), for example, consulted with his wives.'

His was the way of gentleness. His manner for asking for help would be to initiate the action himself. For instance, he might say to his wife, 'May I put that jar over there?' Quickly she would understand, and pick it up herself. This is good manners, you can't find this anywhere. Or, perhaps Rasul-ullah (peace be upon him) would place the jar himself, thus showing respect for his wife and raising her to his level. If a wife was listening closely enough to place the jar herself, it would be better for her than forty years of nafl (voluntary, or superogatory) prayers. His giving her this chance increases domestic pleasure.

His was the way of consultation. When men consult each other, love and respect grow. 'You have the best character,' Allah Almighty says of Muhammad (peace be upon him).

People would reply to the Prophet (peace be upon him), "O, Muhammad! You know best," whenever he would ask them a question.

Thus, social harmony is completed by consultation. Through commanding comes hatred, disrespect, and wildness. If all people practiced consultation, there would be the highest form of civilization and perfection.

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"All religions teach people the ways of real obedience to Allah Almighty," explains our Grandshaykh. "We are His servants whether we accept it or not. Yet, knowing this is not enough. Anyone may say, 'We are the servants of Allah Almighty,' but how many are truly serving as our Lord wants? Something is preventing us from real service, real obedience to Allah. It is our nafs."

"Therefore, man is always between two poles. From one Allah Almighty is calling us to His service, and from the other calls our nafs. When a servant is listening to his Lord, he is the servant of his Lord. When he listens to his nafs, on the other hand, he is the servant of his nafs."

The Prophet (peace be upon him) was teaching us how to save ourselves from being the slave of our nafs. "O, people!" he said, "Die before you die!" This is the advice to those wanting to be real servants to Allah Almighty; always listening to their Lord.

For such a person there are not two Lords, only Allah. Quran says, "If there are two Lords, one must be killed!" A man cannot serve two masters. Our nafs are asking for high life in this world; slay them, and you will be free for your Lord's service and worship.

Our Grandshaykh says that the sign of a man's having reached that point is that he has no demands other than his Lord's. There are, for him, no demands in front of his Lord's. He doesn't say, "I like this. I don't like that." If his Lord likes, he likes—no demands. This is real obedience. He is like the dead body in the hands of the washer. He has surrendered. Does the dead person harm anyone with his hands or with his speech? No, it is impossible! People may give him harm without a reply from him.

This is the meaning of the hadith: "There is no harm in Islam; there is no giving harm for harm." Suppose, for example, that I plant a tree and someone comes and pulls it up.

That is a harm. Yet, Rasul-ullah (peace be upon him) says, "Don't go and do the same to him!"

Of course, if there is no original harm, there can be no reply. No more harms for harms piling up. This was the personal sunnah of the Prophet (peace be upon him). He was a mercy for all of creation, and all of the universe. His real followers are also mercy for all creation; fountains of mercy in this life, and after leaving it. I am not saying 'dying.' Everyone who comes to these people, whether during their lives or by visiting their tombs, will find mercy with them, will find pleasure at their hands.

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Our Shaykh says that haste in all things is not good. There are only three things for which haste was advised by our Prophet (peace be upon him):

The first case in which haste is recommended is when boys and girls reach puberty, we must hurry their marriage. Haste in this case is recommended because it will bring satisfaction for both the community and the individuals involved. All troubles come from unmarried people. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "The worst people are the unwed." Badness in society comes from unmarried people. When Mahdi (peace be upon him) comes, the first order will be for everyone to marry. No single people will remain, and community problems will draw to a close. The Prophet (peace be upon him) says about marriage, "A married man will protect one-half of his religion but must be very careful of the other half, fearful of his actions before his Lord." Therefore, marriage is very important in Islam.

The second case in which haste is advised by the Prophet (peace be upon him) is burying the dead. We shouldn't wait for any reason. The dead body's wish to meet the soil is as a groom's desire to meet the bride.

The third case for haste is in providing for guests. Anything which is ready in the house should be placed upon the table. Do not delay to make an elaborate preparation. A hadith relates, "If you believe in Allah and the Hereafter, you must provide for your guests."

Haste in other than these three things is undesirable. To be patient is an attribute of Rahman (mercy). Our Grandshaykh says, "Sabr (patience) is an attribute of Allah Almighty. If a person wears this attribute, he will be given endless mercy,

and will reach the side of Allah. It is only given to those who wear patience."

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Says our Grandshaykh on correcting wrong actions into right, "In this time it is very difficult. You can't find anyone on the correct way, generally speaking. All are on wrong ways, not pleasing Allah.

"What are these ways? They are the ways of pleasure for the nafs, 'hasad al-amu' (lusts). Nowadays, evils and devils are leading people. Even if all learned people were to meet to try and stop this facade, they would be helpless. Even if all Awliya gathered, they could do nothing. Rasul-ullah (peace be upon him) said, 'The attribute of people (in our times, today) is tyranny. They deny the existence of the Creator, Allah Almighty.' What can be done?

"Allah will send, for this time, a great Wali, a representative of his power. He will come with miracles of the Prophet (peace be upon him), and will destroy evils and devils. He is Mahdi (peace be upon him), and Allah Almighty will prepare him in one night to hold the entire universe in his hands!"

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Concerning the hadith, "Die before you die," Maulana was asked, "How can one accomplish this quickly?"

He replied, "For that, I must lock you in the water closet! Then you will see what this dunya is!"

When we started to write this, he said, "Don't write! Everyone will run away!"

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Our Grandshaykh says, "When Ibrahim, the son of the Prophet (peace be upon him), was born, a neighboring Jew came to congratulate him saying, 'May this son be a faithful follower to you, O, Muhammad. May he not be lazy and may he take your place active with himmah (power of faith!)'

"The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied, 'O, my neighbor, May Allah give you long life, and protect you from all evils and troubles. May He make this world give you much richness!'

"The Prophet (peace be upon him) made this gesture of goodness to an unbeliever, even though he knew that unbelief, denial of the truth, is the biggest evil and the source of all troubles. Allah accepted the Prophet's prayer, and the neighbor came into Islam.

"Therefore, it is sunnah to visit neighbors, even if they are not Muslims. One should respect them, pray for them, and ask Allah to keep them and protect them from evil. You should keep good relations among those living forty houses' distance from you in all directions. Then the country will have a close relationship."

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Our Grandshaykh said, "I'm surprised at how quickly and easily people are learning the language of Satan without a school or teacher! They may learn it anywhere, in the home or in the street. I'm wondering how they learn it so quickly!"

Satan's language is the cause of all troubles. Those words come out like fire. They must destroy both the one who speaks, and the one who listens. They make traps for men, catching them and throwing them into hell. Now we are living in a time when all people, from the highest to the lowest, are speaking Satan's language; each one making traps for another.

Mankind and nations are on this way until they return to Allah's ways. Until there is Allah's language, no love will live among people. It is the honor of mankind to speak Divine languages. He who likes Allah must speak Holy words. Therefore, we are waiting for a big teacher to come and teach Allah's language with Divine power!

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Each one of these lessons solves one problem for mankind. Each one is a help for a certain situation. They may be of use now and also when Mahdi (peace be upon him) comes. They will not lose their value.

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Our Grandshaykh described how a dervish may be acceptable as a servant to Allah Almighty:

"He must have one character from each of three animals," he said. "From the donkey, he must be able to carry burdens

with patience, and without objections. Unless he can do this he will be unsuccessful, for without patience one cannot carry the responsibilities of life.

"From the dog, he must learn faithfulness to his master. If the master tells the dog to stay somewhere until the man returns, that dog will stay, even until death. If the owner beats it and chases it away, the dog will still return, with tail wagging, when its master calls.

"Finally, when a man looks at a pig he must know that his nafs is dirtier and filthier than the pig. The dirt of pigs is external, while the nafs is dirty inside. The nafs' dirt comes from fighting with his Lord. Pigs' dirt comes from eating dirty things, not from fighting. Perfect man must have such a character that he will accept whatever dirt is thrown on him, whether by words or actions, knowing that his nafs is dirtier.

"These three characters of animals are for prophets and awliya. If a man doesn't have these characters, he isn't a prophet who carries all the burdens of the world, accepts all sorts of abuse, and still keeps total faith in his Lord and patience for all. These are the footsteps upon which we must follow. These characters give man rest and satisfaction in his heart. Only in this way can he reach happiness in this life. Otherwise, he will be unhappy always.

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"If our actions of today are not better than our actions of yesterday, it would be better for us to be in the earth than on it!"

So says our Grandshaykh speaking about the hadith which tells us when death is preferable to life. It is an exact balance upon which we can weigh our actions and measure our progress. It means that everyday we must turn to our Lord more and more. This is improvement, to place our hearts more and more in the Divine Presence. Day by day, we should improve, cutting the bonds with which our nafs tie us to this life so that we may go freely up to Heaven. No one who is filled with the satisfactions and pleasures of this life may approach the Divine Presence. This is because he who is aiming towards his Heavenly station has no interest in this life, this dunya.

He who thinks about the Divine Presence, all troubles of this life will be as nothing for him! The best day for him will be the day when he is free from all his bonds and goes to Allah! There is endless pleasure in the Divine Presence, and he

enters into oceans of satisfaction! The ancient doctors of wisdom had a prescription for nervous people. They told them to look at the sky instead of the ground. It is a simple example for this point. When a man looks to the Heavens, even if it is only with his eyes, he forgets his troubles. What will be the result if he looks with his heart to his Lord!

Our Grandshaykh says that nowadays it would be better for almost everyone to be under the ground, in their graves. This is because everyday they are making new ties and bonds to this world. For them troubles are growing every day also. "O, My people! Cut your ties and come to Me," says Allah Almighty. "I have prepared for you all pleasures! Endless beauty, enjoyment, and happiness!" This announcement is for every moment. Everyone may hear this in his heart, but people are not using the ears in their hearts.

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"The balance of the community is with the family," says our Grandshaykh, "and the balance of the family is with the obedience of the wife to her husband."

No one may object to this point. When a woman obeys her husband, it is a decrec for her pleasure in Paradise. Obedience has been ordered for wives to husbands, not husbands to their wives. It is contrary to nature for the strong to obey the weak. This is the law of nature, and the law of Allah; anyone going against this law must be punished.

Nowadays, men are obeying women. Every day, troubles are growing. People are leaving their obedience to Allah, and following Satan! The results of this are today's endless troubles. It is the order of Allah for the wife to obey the husband. If she disobeys, however, and her husband has patience with her, it will mean degrees in Paradise for him. The goodness or the badness that we do in this life will not go unnoticed by our Lord.

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"I'm not giving advice to people," said our Grandshaykh, "because I can't find anyone who can keep that advice!"

All Awliya are now hidden, because no one is listening to them. When there is no one to listen, they do not speak. People aren't listening to the ulema (scholars), or the Awliya (saints), but only to the commands of their nafs, their egos. Only through fear of punishment will they obey any law at

all, like small boys fearing the teacher's stick. But the wise men, the ulema, have no power in these times. No one will listen to them.

The only correction for this is the edge of the sword of Mahdi (peace be upon him). There is no other way. This is not an ordinary sword, but a miracle sword, a terrible sword! Therefore, we are waiting, all goodhearted people are waiting for this power to come. It will come to cut off all the evils and devils now governing this world.

Bad people are not waiting, not looking for this huge event. They wish to continue forever. But, there is a Divine law; for every period there is a limit. No one can change the limits set by Allah Almighty. Now, we are in the period of tyrants. They have their limit, and then, finished! They are like a man stepping towards a buried mine; step by step, and then... BOOM! They will have reached their limit. Every day, the world is approaching this limit; it is the third world war!

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Our Grandshaykh said, "If twelve thousand real believers were to fight against seven kingdoms, they would win."

Hadith, also, tells us that, "It is impossible not to win if twelve thousand of my nation will go against any army."

The quantity isn't important, but the quality is. In the army of Mahdi (peace be upon him), each man will be worth an army. What will be their qualities? "If you cut off their skins," said our Shaykh, "they would not change!"

The owner of Bilal (may Allah be pleased with him) placed him under a rock in the desert. His only reply was, "Allah, Allah!" If a person has real faith, like that, in difficult situations, Heavenly power will come to him. If there is no faith, he will die.

Our Grandshaykh told Maulana that one day, he was at sea in a terrible storm. Quickly, the little boat in which he was traveling began to fill with water. All the people began to panic, except our Grandshaykh and one other man. Our Grandshaykh asked that fellow, "Why aren't you afraid?"

"O, Shaykh Abdullah," replied the man, "nothing is changing. We are in Allah's hands!"

Soon, a big ship came, and saved them all from the storm. In this way, Allah Almighty was testing and trying his servants. When He sees that their Iman is all right, He takes them out of

danger. For this, a servant must develop 'sakina' (calm) in the face of difficulties.

When Mahdi (peace be upon him) comes, twelve thousand soldiers from five countries in the west (known only to the Awliya) will come. Those twelve thousand are always in contact with Divine powers, a sign of real faith. They are forever steadfast, never turning their faces from the Face of Allah Almighty under any circumstances. Armies turn to ashes under their gaze. They are descendants of Sayyidina Ali (may Allah be pleased with him). When Mahdi (peace be upon him) says, "Allahu-akbar!" they will be ready at the south gate of Damascus, from Aman.

Allah sets limits, and this one is soon to be suddenly finished. Each happening has its proper time. You may wake in the morning to a different world!

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An important and fine point from the teachings of our Grandshaykh: The best of knowledge is the secret wisdom in it, not its outside shell. Whoever has been given this secret meaning has been given that which is most valuable. Anyone may find oysters on the shore, but to find a pearl you must dive to the depths.

The shell is the keeper of the pearl. Everyone may read Quran and hadith, but not everyone can understand the secret wisdom contained in them. It is not given to every person. Allah Almighty only gives these secrets to the hearts of His pure servants.

When a servant is given this valuable knowledge, his heart becomes like a fountain where many people may drink. Our Grandshaykh's heart is a fountain of secret knowledge. It is the power of our 'Burraq' (our Heavenly 'horse') with which we are approaching the Divine Presence. As much as we have 'Hikmah' (wisdom) we are approaching...

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Our Grandshaykh says, "Here is an important and useful secret. It can be knowledge for anyone. As much as he remembers and knows, he will draw much benefit.

"We can observe the universe, and know that it is filled with many creatures, all made by the creator. What we must also see, however, is that the Creator and His creatures stand together. All things exist by the power of the Creator. If He

Almighty did not support all things, they would vanish instantly. They have no existence outside of their Lord's power. They are like shadows. If you hold your hand over a table, you can see its shadow. If you remove your hand, the shadow goes away. One is original, the other is not.

"Allah Almighty is the original, the Creator. All prophets and Awliya teach that absolute existence is for Him, alone. There is no existence for any other. This must be a base for our knowledge to stand upon. If there is no true foundation for building knowledge, then our building will be imaginary, useless.

"Some foolish people ask, 'Who created the Creator?' It is a stupid question. The Creator cannot be created. All religions, all prophets, give a description for Allah Almighty by saying, 'By Allah, I am Lord! I am not in need of anything! I am He who stands by Himself! All the universe stands by My power!' Qayyum. Therefore, the Creator must be one; two is impossible, for one would then be in need of the other. He Almighty is in need of nothing. This is the explanation of 'Tawhid.'

"Our existence is by Him Almighty. He is sending the spirit to us at all times. If He is not sending, there is no existence for us. We are nothing by ourselves. All creation is as a shadow of the hand of Allah. When the hand moves, the shadow moves. All things, all goodness and badness, no matter where, or from whom they appear to be coming, are in reality coming from Allah Almighty. This is deep knowledge. If a man knows this, he will be fixed in his belief, unmoving, like a mountain in powerful winds! It is the sixth pillar of Iman, of faith.

"When a man knows that all things, all people, are only an appearance of the power of Allah Almighty, then he will, out of respect to his Lord, keep respect for everyone. Allah Almighty will then change what had been badness into goodness for that servant. When you reach the reality of this point, no one can harm you or give you trouble. For your good manners, and your respect of your Lord and His creatures, Allah will change your harmer into your helper! You must say, 'This fellow coming to me exists by my Lord's will. He is my Lord's servant, therefore I must keep his respect.'

"Fighting evils? You must know that the father of evils is within ourselves. It is our nafs. To fight your own nafs is enough. This is a strong lesson."

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Here is another important lesson from our Grandshaykh: "Allah sent one hundred twenty-four thousand prophets (peace and blessings be upon them) since the time of Adam (peace be upon him). From the Heavens He sent so many Holy books. What was the Divine reason for this? After the last Prophet, Muhammad (peace be upon him), so many Awliya were also sent to lead and teach people. For what?

"They were sent to show people how to put out their egotism. Each person has nafs which claim, 'I must be obeyed. I must be the sultan to which all people obey!' There is no limit to the nafs' demands. Egos wish even Allah and his Prophet (peace be upon him) to bow to their desires!"

This is a complete description of our nafs. Prophets taught that the danger to people lay within the ego. They came, therefore, along with all the Holy books, to teach people how to strip off their nafs until they can't claim anything. Our Grandshaykh knows the secret tricks of the nafs. He tells us that people's sickness is a result of their egos. All problems result from this, personally and generally. Remember, the nafs claims always to be first, and that all must listen to it. Therefore, you must not listen. It is dangerous to listen to the nafs. Only by fighting against your ego can you reach happiness, here and hereafter . . .

"How can we fight our nafs?" asks our Grandshaykh. "The law (Shariah) of the Prophet (peace be upon him) puts men's actions into two categories: those that we are ordered to do, and those that we are prohibited from doing. We must follow this law, that is the way to leave egotism.

"The nafs will always fight the orders of Allah, and run toward prohibited actions. We must refuse them. If we can defeat the nafs, then all things will be all right for us. With our nafs dead, there are no more objections to the orders of our Lord, no more claims to be sultan. We will say only, 'O, my Lord! I am your servant!'

"The main target of all prophets is to teach man to say, 'O, my Lord, as you like. I am ready!' Allah Almighty then says, 'O, my servant! As you like!' This is the station of the Awliyyah, where people may be given immediately upon asking."

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"There is a hadith," says our Grandshaykh, "that tells us that we must ask for knowledge. It is an order of our Lord.

Whoever asks for knowledge will be taught by the Prophet (peace be upon him), the Awliya or by Allah Himself. The condition is that we must ask.

"Who is a seeker of knowledge? What are his attributes? His first sign is humbleness. It is a necessary condition for learning, for whoever is humble may accept all the conditions and difficulties he will encounter on his way to knowledge. He may, for instance, have to leave home and live among foreign peoples with unfamiliar customs. He must, if he is a real seeker of knowledge, be willing to wear old clothes, sleep on the floor, and share unaccustomed meals with strangers, always being patient for the knowledge to lead him to his Lord's Presence. If a man cannot accept difficult situations, whatever they may be, then he is not humble. Allah gives to everyone who asks with humbleness and sincerity, but Holy knowledge is prohibited to those whose hearts are filled with pride.

"Egotism is the worst character of the nafs. It was for this character that Allah Almighty expelled Iblis from the Divine Presence. When Iblis was ordered to make sajdah (to bow down) to Adam (peace be upon him), he hesitated and remained standing for a moment. This hesitation was so slight that it went unnoticed by all, save Allah Almighty. In that one instant Iblis claimed, 'I am also God. No one is ruler over me!' For that one moment's rebellion, Iblis was thrown from the Divine Presence! Our nafs have the same character as this. They are always in rebellion to our Lord's orders. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, 'The greatest enemy to man is his nafs.' Therefore, if anyone is thrown from the Divine Presence, it is due to egotism. This is very strong knowledge if a man knows and believes."

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We are trying here not to teach, but to be believing. That is the difference between this place and other schools. We are taking care to make people believe, for whoever believes will keep orders.

The Prophet of Allah (peace be upon him) was in Mecca for thirteen years, trying to make people believe. It was only afterwards that they were sent to Medina, because only the believers could keep the orders. Millions of people know this hadith, but what is the benefit; they don't keep it!

The important point is to make people believe. Nowadays, there are millions of Muslims, but you can't find many believers among them. The Sahaba (may Allah be pleased with them) of the Prophet (peace be upon him) were only a few thousand, but there was not one unbeliever among them. Because of their belief, victory was with them. The thirteen years spent in Mecca formed a foundation of belief to build a religion upon. Only when they believed exactly did Allah order the Hijra.

We must take an example from the Prophet (peace be upon him). You must do your best to make people believe in you, even if it is only one person. Then, you will be beside Prophets on the Judgment Day! You must be trustworthy; for if a man believes in you, he will do whatever you advise.

You must follow a man ninety-nine steps, so that he may come with you one step. Even if that man is going to haram, don't abandon him! If you saw a man drowning in a dirty river, would you stand on the bank and refuse to jump in and save him because the water was dirty? If you can swim, you must save him. As our power allows, we must do our best; ninety-nine "NO's" for one "YES." Ninety-nine steps for friendship, it is a strong sword.

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"Nafs is our most dangerous enemy," says our Grandshaykh. "We must be very careful of its endless traps and tricks. One trick of our ego is to claim humbleness when what it really desires is to be highly regarded by others. Abu Yazid al-Bistami (may Allah grant him more honors) said to us, 'You must look to your nafs, O, my sons, with such a looking that you may see that it is lower than all people. You must say, 'My nafs is no good. My nafs is worse than those of all people. It is worse than Pharoah, worse than Nimrod, worse even, than Satan!' Unless you are saying this, you cannot smell the good smells of reality within our Tariqat. If a man doesn't accept that his nafs is worse than everybody else's, he really is the worst! Proud people cannot enter paradise, or smell the perfume.'"

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Our Grandshaykh says, "Allah gives to any who ask. He never refuses His servants, even unbelievers. It is not his attribute to refuse anyone asking, 'O, my Lord! Give to me!'"

"It is also ordered for us to give, when our Lord asks. As we give, He gives to us. It is like taking water from a well, the water level stays the same, without becoming less and less! If you give one, Allah Almighty will give ten, twenty! There would be no problems if everyone in the world believed this, especially the wealthy. Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) said to the Prophet (peace be upon him), 'Before Islam, I kept my hand in a tight fist, but now I open it without end.'

"Everybody may ask Allah for anything. Sometimes, He gives immediately, sometimes He gives later. Maybe He will not give during a man's life, but will give after death, in Barzakh (between this life and Akhirah, the life hereafter). We determine here, in this world, what Barzakh holds for us. Maybe Allah won't give until the last day."

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"What is the most valuable thing to ask from Allah?" a visitor asked Shaykh Nazim.

"Our Grandshaykh is speaking to me," replied Maulana, "and asking me to tell you of a dream he had."

"O, Nazim Effendi," says our Grandshaykh, "I was dreaming today of the eyes of my Lord! I cannot describe the beauty of his eyes! They are not like anything. 'What do you want?' He asks me. O, my Lord! I am asking to be your obedient servant, nothing else."

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From Tariq's notes: "Today there are only three of us for Salat al-Dhur; Shaykh Mustafa, Shaykh Muhammad Salli, and this writer. As we stand in the doorway of the mosque, waiting for Shaykh Nazim to enter first, he stops and turns to us."

"Shaykh Mustafa, what are you thinking?" asked Maulana.

"Nothing," he answered.

"Shaykh Muhammad Salli, what are you thinking?"

"Right now, I am not thinking of anything," replied the other.

"You must think," said Maulana. "I am asking for power to catch my nafs, and a sword with which I might return to my country and fight the dragon of evils, and save my people! Your time is very valuable here in this sacred

area of Damascus. Here, Divine Power is coming down! Each day, you must ask for more power. You must be aiming at this, not just passing the day!"

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PART TWO

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Rasul-ullah (peace be upon him) said, "Iman is sabr!" Faith is patience. Patience (sabr) is the root of all good character. It is enough for the practice of Islam, completely! How can you reach the end of patience?

Our Grandshaykh tells us that Allah Almighty tries His servants to see if they will be patient. We must remember this so that when an event comes to tax our patience, we will remain firm. We must keep 'patience at the first blow.' If we keep patience, if we keep our Iman, our power will grow and our enemies' power will become smaller.

When we speak of enemies, we must know who our enemy really is. So many people are ready to go to war to kill other people. In Islam there can be no war without a Caliph, a leader bringing the authority of Allah and His Prophet (peace be upon him). We are waiting for such a leader to come. He will be Mahdi (peace be upon him), and until he comes, there is no authority for war in Islam.

War against other men is the lesser of two wars for man. The war that must concern us now is the greater war, the war against our nafs. That is our real enemy, our own egos! In this war, the angry man loses and the patient man gains.

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"If Satan, himself, would ask pardon of Allah Almighty," says our Grandshaykh, "Allah would pardon him! He will not ask pardon, though. Why? It is because of his ego and pride.

"All of us have such a character. We say to ourselves, 'I am something!' We give ourselves rank and distinctions. 'I am a scholar,' we may say about ourselves. Or, 'I am a German, an American, a Creole, a turk, a shaykh...' Each one of us makes of himself something to be proud of.

"This keeps us from our Heavenly stations. Our egos tie us in this way. Allah Almighty would pardon even Satan if he would leave his ego, his self-importance! This is the main strategic point in the great war on our nafs. We must not be proud. We must not think, 'I am something.' We must lose our

self-importance. This is the top point! If we reach this, then we may take other points easily."

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Now, another lesson from our Grandshaykh: "All believers from all Holy religions believe that Allah is Creator. He created all bounty and all favors. For whom did He create all this? For His obedient servants.

"To be an obedient servant means to be doing your actions with your Lord's pleasure. If an action is for your Lord's pleasure, or a favor is taken with your Lord's pleasure, it means that it is 'Halal.' If a favor is taken without your Lord's pleasure, that thing is 'Haram.' Allah Almighty gives to all His servants, believers, and unbelievers alike; but for non-believers, those who take and do without their Lord's pleasure, those favors are 'haram.'

"It is Halal to remember your Lord when you take a favor. When you say, 'Bismillah ir-Rahman ir-Rahim' before you take something, and 'Al-Hamdulillah' afterwards, it indicates that your heart is with your Lord, even if you say it without thinking. It is, of course, better to say it from the heart, knowingly.

"Anything an unbeliever does is 'Haram,' for he does it without his Lord's pleasure."

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"If everything is written for us," asked a murid of Shaykh Nazim, "then what difference does it make what we do? We can only do what we are destined to do."

"Do you know what is written for you?" replied Maulana. "Can you see what the future holds for you?"

"No," replied the disciple, "but still, if something is written for me, I will have no choice but to do it. I have no free will in my actions."

Again the Shaykh replied, "We don't know what is written for us. Therefore, we have the responsibility to choose our actions. We must choose our Lord's pleasure. If we could see what is written for us, then we would have no responsibility. But now we can't see, we don't know, and so we must assume responsibility for our actions. We can choose halal or haram. We must choose our Lord's pleasure. If we will listen to our conscience, we can know goodness from badness, halal from haram. Our conscience is from the Heavens, it is always right.

There is no such thing as a sick conscience, but sometimes we put such a heavy load on it that we are unable to hear its cry. Therefore, we must make an intention to always listen to our conscience. If we do this, Allah will give our conscience more power. Our conscience is giving us good signs, don't try to fight against it. Don't try to justify bad actions. It is wrong.

"When Allah is not pleased with a man's actions, he makes all favors for that man haram, in this life and in the next. Adam (peace be upon him) disobeyed his Lord's orders and was cast out from Paradise. His trial and examination were from Allah Almighty, but Adam (peace be upon him) did not know this. He did not know what was written for him. He listened to Satan and to his ego, not to his Lord. He had a responsibility to choose goodness and obedience to Allah, and so do we today. Discussions of free will versus predestination are empty talk. We don't know the reality of that point. Therefore, we have choice. We must intend to listen to our conscience, and to choose our Lord's pleasure, always."

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"Don't be lazy!" says our Grandshaykh.

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Here is an important point for all people, especially believers:

We know that Allah Almighty sent one hundred twenty-four thousand prophets. They began with Adam (peace be upon him) and ended with the Seal of the Prophets, Muhammad (peace be upon him). We also know that Allah sent all the Holy Books. Why were they sent? There are so many tariqats, sufi schools, and shaykhs, but what is their wisdom? What are they teaching people?

The main point, the goal (riya) is to teach people that they are the servants of Allah Almighty, and how they can be obedient servants.

"Our serving Allah Almighty," says our Grandshaykh, "how shall it be?" He is answering for us: "It is not asking anything from Him. It is honor enough for men to be His servants, nothing more."

Sayyidina Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) said, "It is glory enough for us to be Your slave, and it is honor enough for us that You Almighty are our Lord." When a man reaches this point, it means that he has stopped being his ego's servant.

He will then be as Sayyidina Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) was: his Lord's sincere servant.

Our Grandshaykh says, "When we shall be free of our ego's enslavement, we will be free from our bad characters. This will take fighting step by step, like capturing a country. First you must capture the capital, then you may rule! The ego is always demanding to be king. While it rules, your inner kingdom is hidden. You can never reach it while your nafs is king!

"If a man is serving his Lord and asking rewards, he and Satan are on the same level. Satan was asking big rewards—to be chief of all creatures. When Allah made Adam (peace be upon him) chief, Satan began rebelling. If he had not been asking rewards to begin with, he would never have felt the need to rebel. He would have been, instead, satisfied with his Lord's will in all matters.

"The most acceptable dua for us is to ask, 'O, my Lord! May I be your sincere servant! May I be always with that honor, here and hereafter!' According to their level, people are asking something. But the highest level of faith is to be asking nothing, to serve for the love of Allah Almighty."

Shaykh Nazim said, "Shaykh Anwar here serves us tea. I do not pay him any money to do this. No, he serves for the love of his Shaykh and his Grandshaykh, and therefore for the love and pleasure of our Prophet (peace be upon him) and our Lord, Allah Almighty. This is how our serving should be."

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"Maulana," asked one of his murids, "You told us that there were one hundred twenty-four thousand prophets before Muhammad (peace be upon him). What happened to the revelations that they brought? Did they become so changed over the years that their followers were no longer people of the book?"

Shaykh Nazim answered him, "Before Holy Books were sent, there came to man only pages. Each prophet received his special orders. Some of these are mentioned in Quran, some are not. It is not important to know all the names and times of those prophets. Before us, so many nations passed away. Now it is our turn. Therefore, the most important thing for us is to know that those prophets came only to teach men how it is to be an obedient servant to Allah Almighty."

Maulana continued, "It is important to know what is the main goal for our lives. Each of us has an ego, nafs, saying that it is our king, and that we must be its subjects. All prophets came to show men how to take that kingdom away from our

nafs and give it to our spirits. Only then can we be real servants to Allah Almighty. This alone must be our goal. This is what is important, not so many names and places.

"Our egos never finish with asking questions. You must say 'NO' to your ego. Otherwise, your soul will remain imprisoned."

"What exactly is the ego?" asked another murid. "What are its weaknesses, and what is the best way to fight it?"

Again, Shaykh Nazim spoke, "There are, within ourselves, two contrary powers always in struggle. One takes us toward goodness, the other takes us toward badness. Our nafs is asking badness from us always. It demands that you serve it, and it is never satisfied. It is asking all things; there is no end to its cravings. You must stop it. You must say to it, 'Nothing for you, O, nafs! But all things for my Lord!'"

The murid continued his questioning, "Does this mean that I should give up things like eating, etc.?"

"No," answered the Shaykh. "You must eat to stay healthy. The nafs, however, demands not only what the body needs to sustain itself, but also to eat all things. The ego desires its own share, and also everybody else's share! This is the character of the nafs, and it is growing with us as we get older. A little boy wants all toys. A big man wants the whole world!

"We are like little fish with their mouths open wanting to swallow the ocean. All nafs is like this. We are little creatures, but our desires are endless. Therefore, we are saying firstly that you must stop all your desires. Take only as you need. We are all sitting at the Divine feast. Allah Almighty says, 'O, my servants! Each of you may take from what is provided as you need.' Each of us has a share, but ego says, 'No! Whole feast for me! Nothing for another!'

"So, each ego tries to swallow the whole feast. But it cannot; we can hold only a little. Therefore, all prophets are saying, 'Each of you must take as he is given from his Lord's table. You must not look to other's shares.' You are not real believers if you are not accepting for each person as you are accepting for yourselves."

A disciple asked, "How do I recognize my rightful share? For instance, when I go out to run my business, how shall I know what is mine and what is not?"

"Your share will come to you," answered the Shaykh. "But, if you are looking to take from him also, no. You must look to what is coming to you, not what is coming to another. Never take from your neighbor's share!"

"Do I have to take everything coming to me?" came the question.

"Yes!" came the reply. "If it is more than you need, and more than those dependent upon you need, you must give it to those who have nothing. Allah will give you rewards for your giving! Don't keep from Allah's favor more than you need. It is your Lord's pleasure that you give to those who don't have!"

Shaykh Nazim went on, "There is no end to pursuing your ego's desires. Our greed grows in proportion to our wealth. In the time of Moses (peace be upon him), there was a very rich man named Kora. So wealthy was he that it took sixty mules just to carry the keys to his treasure chests! And yet this man found it impossible to spare any of that enormous wealth for zakat. (In Islam zakat is the obligatory tax to be given to the needy. For each person, the amount of tax is figured to be one-fortieth of all that he owns in excess of what is required to sustain him and his family.) This is the character of the nafs. As riches grow, so does greed. A man may have one dollar. He will give away fifty cents. If he has ten dollars, he will give ten cents. If he has one-thousand dollars, he will give nothing! Until we leave that character, we will not be our Lord's sincere servants.

"All problems come from that character; when a man is not satisfied with his share, he looks to take from others."

"Shaykh Nazim," asked another murid, "today I was walking in the town, when I saw a beggar. I was carrying a lot of money with me, and suddenly I felt the desire to give it all to that man. But quickly I thought that if I gave him everything, while I was in this city so far from home, it wouldn't be such a good idea. So, I gave only a coin. As I walked away, however, I began to feel terrible, like I had done something very bad. And yet, the idea of leaving myself stranded in a strange country with no money still didn't seem too good either. Was that original impulse to give everything away the correct one?"

"Yes," the Shaykh laughed, "that was all right. But this character of the ego is very difficult to fight. It needs long treatment!"

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Our Grandshaykh was saying how we can be sincere servants of our Lord: "When a man is the servant of his Lord,

he is not asking anything from Him. Then he is a real servant. He says only, 'May you be pleased with me, O, my Lord.' All prophets and saints are real servants of Allah Almighty. They have been taken to freedom from the hands of their egos."

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"There are three actions," says our Grandshaykh, "that will never leave their actors. Even if a man becomes an unbeliever he will find these actions at the end of his life. At that time, they will come to save him from unbelief and carry him into Iman! He will come to Islam at the end of his life.

"The first of these good actions is Salawat for the Prophet (peace be upon him). 'Allahumma salli ala Muhammadin wa ala ali Muhammadin wa sallim'; this gives our respect and love for our Prophet (peace be upon him). It means, 'O, my Lord! Give Muhammad your mercy and your glory and your honor, here and hereafter.' This respect, even if spoken only once in a man's life, will come back at the last moment of his life to save him. It is a mercy from Allah.

"Secondly, we have been ordered in Islam to do goodness along our lives (maruf). There is no permission for us to do or think badness for anybody. We must do goodness for everyone. Our faith pushes us away from badness and pulls us toward goodness. Even after our death we have been ordered to do goodness! 'Wasiyyah' is the obligatory inheritance we must leave for the general good of the community. One-third of our estate must be left for the benefit of the needy, and the other two-thirds may go to our heirs. This may be used to build schools, for instance, or hospitals, or to feed the poor. It is ordered for us. Yet, as beneficial as wasiyyah may be, it is even more acceptable to Allah if you give during your life. It is, in fact, better to give one dollar with your own hand, during your life, than it is to leave seventy dollars in your will, after your death. This action, to do goodness throughout your life, and to give to those who are in need, will not leave a man at the end of his life, but will come back to save him. It is a sign that you believe in the Last Day, in the Judgment and the Resurrection.

"If anyone harms you, forgive him!" This is the third action that will come back to save a man at the last moment of his life. The act of forgiveness cannot be lost to a man; it is the character of prophets. If a man has the character to forgive

people, Allah Almighty will forgive him huge sins. He will not give permission for the angels to write any sin against him! People with the character of forgiveness are very, very few—not even one in one million! It is the reality of faith, for a believer believes that 'If I am forgiving, my Lord is forgiving me.' If anyone is forgiving, believer or unbeliever, his Lord is forgiving him. This is the character of prophets, and will come to a man even at the last moment. He will not die an unbeliever. Even among believers, this character is very rare!"

A question was asked, "What if you witness a crime?"

Shaykh Nazim answered, "For those things, there are two responsibilities: for the victim, and for Allah Almighty. If a man is stealing your property, you may forgive him. Allah also may forgive him, or He may punish him as He wishes. If a man is stealing from someone else, and you see it, then you may be a witness in court. If you are called, then you must go and tell what you saw. If you are not called, if nobody knows you witnessed the crime, you may go your way. You may try to stop the criminal, if you can, but you must not throw yourself into danger. You are not a policeman. What can you do if the criminals have guns?"

"The rights of forgiveness are for yourself. If someone is harming you, you may forgive. You must remember this with regard to crimes involving *things*: there is no value for this world in the sight of Allah Almighty.

"Forgiveness brings peace; revenge brings troubles. Allah says, 'If you are bringing peace, your reward is on My shoulders!' When a murder is committed, it is permitted in Islam to take revenge on the killer. However, if even one of the victim's heirs says, 'No!,' then that revenge cannot be carried out. Instead, 'blood money' is paid to the dead person's survivors. Even in a case such as this, however, forgiveness may be better. When Jesus (peace be upon him) was reminded that the Torah prescribed execution, he replied, 'That was for governments, not for prophets!' (In Islam, Shariah is law for governments also.)

"Absolute forgiveness is for Allah only. To let incorrigible murderers, repeated offenders who are dangerous to society, loose would be a mistake. To forgive them would not bring peace. This is the essence of the principle of forgiveness. Will it bring peace? Why are you leaving snakes? You cannot forgive a snake!"

Then someone mentioned a news item of the day that a former government leader had just been hung for crimes he had

committed while in office. He asked Maulana, "Should we be glad when a villain like that gets what he deserved?"

The Shaykh answered him like this: "Allahumma la taykiln'y illa nafsi tarfitai! 'O my Lord! Keep me from my ego!' This is what we must say when we hear or see anyone undergoing any punishment. This is because it was his ego's badness that led him to that fate, and if we are left to the hands of our egos, our fate may be the very same! We cannot enjoy the punishment of another; when we hear of such a thing, we must immediately escape to our Lord, and ask not to be left to the hands of our egos. 'Allahumma la taykiln'y illa nafsi tarfitai. It means, 'O, my Lord! Don't leave me to my ego's hands for even one moment!' It is so dangerous; in a single moment, the ego may make a mistake that will carry a man to punishment along the rest of his life. Imprisonment! Hanging! All for one moment's mistake, Qatam!

"Therefore, it is not enough to say only in words, 'I am Muslim! I am a believer!' You must really believe; you must show it in your actions. Just because a man is Muslim, it does not mean that he has conquered his ego. Muslims have more responsibility than others. Our punishment is heavier than others' punishment. We are responsible as our knowledge grows. There is no responsibility for ignorant people.

"Our Grandshaykh once told me, 'The most acceptable, the most valuable, the most lovely worshipping is sajdah (prostration). If a man makes sajdah from the beginning of the world to the end, how big will be his reward! But, if a man tries to make peace between two people, it is more lovely and more acceptable to Allah than all the worshipping of all men and all jinn since the beginning of time!'"

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Our Grandshaykh says, "FATIHA, the first sura of Quran, came twice, once in Mecca, and once in Medina. What is the reason that Allah sent this sura twice?"

"It is because FATIHA is the most important sura in Quran. According to tradition all Holy books are contained in Quran, and all meanings of Quran are contained in FATIHA. Therefore, if a man reads sura FATIHA, it is as if he had read all Holy books and Quran also!

"FATIHA contains the Bible, Torah, Psalms, one-hundred pages that were sent before the Holy books, and all of Quran. Therefore, it has been ordered to read FATIHA in every rak'at

of every prayer. If a man reads Quran seven times, without FATIHA, he cannot reach the reward gained by one reading of FATIHA!

"Allah sent FATIHA first in Mecca. Along with it came endless Rahmah (mercy). Gabrael, bringing FATIHA to Muhammad (peace be upon him), said, 'O, Muhammad! Allah Almighty gives you His salaams and says to you, "Good tidings for FATIHA; if anyone from your ummah (nation) reads FATIHA even once, in his life, it will be enough, and more, for that servant!"'

"He who reads FATIHA will take enough Rahma from one reading to last his whole life. Even if he is an unbeliever, one reading will bring him to Iman, perhaps at the last moment of his life. This is because faith is original, inborn with people. Unbelief is a temporary condition added later. FATIHA will bring faith even to a doer of bad things.

"The second time FATIHA came was in Medina. Again it came with endless Rahmah, but this Rahmah was not like the first. The second Rahmah for FATIHA was so big and so powerful that the angels who brought the first Rahmah were unable to carry it. Allah said to Muhammad (peace be upon him) the second time, 'O, my Prophet! I am sending to you, from My mercy oceans of FATIHA, only one wave; one wave only from the mercy oceans in My Divine Presence! If you knew the whole mercy oceans belonging to FATIHA, you would not order your nation to worship, pray, or anything else; for that mercy from FATIHA would be enough! But no one knows the wideness of My mercy oceans!'

"This second wave of mercy from FATIHA was so strong that, by comparison, the first wave, which came in Mecca (and from which one reading in a man's life is enough), was nothing. Allah Almighty said, 'O, My beloved Muhammad! If My servants know what I am hiding from them in My mercy oceans they would say, "No need for any worshipping."' If a man does sajdah all his life, he will take from that ocean only a drop. But Allah is sending oceans, not drops. He gives out of His generosity, not because of anyone's worship and regardless of anyone's lack of worship. This is the interpretation of the verse, 'Allah Almighty is giving endless honor and glory to the sons of Adam (peace be upon him).'

"If a man knows that his Lord, Allah Almighty, gives His mercy to all regardless of their worshipping, he will gain adab, good manners. How can he be proud of his worshipping, when a lifetime of prayer will bring only one drop compared to what

his Lord is sending out of His Divine generosity? The worst thing for a man is to say, 'I am a good worshipper. I am a good servant, and others are bad.' This is the way of Satan. This is a good lesson for all religious people; don't be proud with all your prayers, fasting, Hajj, long beards, big turbans. It is as nothing. More Rahmah than you could ever gain is already coming; coming also to those you hold in contempt.

"Knowing this makes us humble. None of us can be the authority to put people in Heaven or Hell. Allah gave without looking for our prayers and worship. He gave before our birth. We need do nothing, and yet we still worship to show thanks, to show good manners to our Lord. We are in need of His mercy. Without it, nothing.

"Therefore, we give good tidings and happiness to people. If we say to unbelievers, 'You will receive punishment,' will their love for their Lord grow? Or will good tidings of their Lord's endless mercy for them as they are cause their hearts to open! So we are giving good tidings to people, not making them afraid or unhappy. If you were to tell people, for example, about a good king so much tolerance, so much justice, so much goodness and mercy—wouldn't they open their hearts to him, and look to find him? But if you tell about a bad king—so difficult, stern, giving punishment, all his prisons are filled up—will people like him or hate him? Allah said to Moses (peace be upon him), 'O, Moses! Make My people like Me!' This is the order of our Lord, not hating-liking! Therefore, we give all good tidings for all people, whether they accept our beliefs or not. It is not important."

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"The first sunnah," says our Grandshaykh, "is to ask only for life in the Divine Presence. Don't hold any love for this world in your heart. A man who asks only the Divine Presence, and who directs all his actions toward that goal, will receive strength in this life. The Sahaba followed this way and, therefore, were glorious in everything that they did.

"Sunnah is the way of the Prophet (peace be upon him). Where does his way lead? It leads to the Divine Presence; and so, we must follow it. It is simple. 'What was the way of prophets?' I ask all religious men. The way of prophets is to reach the Divine Presences. Who can say differently?

"Men have changed their ways to those different from the way of the prophets. Now, we are on the way of this life; the

way of devils! More and more, we are tasting this life; more things, more palaces, more money, more pleasures. Therefore, we fight with each other. We fight over this dirty life.

"You can't see a man who asks for the Divine Presence, who is asking for Allah, fighting for that dirty life. This is the sunnah! It is not external things. It is not making wudu, praying, wearing turbans. The sunnah is making your heart pure. The sunnah is asking to be in the Divine Presence, and leaving the love of this dirty life! This is a powerful lesson for those who object to following Islam.

"The vulture is the biggest of birds, but its character is not to run after its prey. It waits, and eats after the other animals have eaten. This is a good way for us. When you see all people rushing on a thing, leave them. Take only what you need. This is the way of prophets. Anyone taking more than he needs takes poison, not pleasure!

"In this life, the measure of richness is by zeroes. Ten, one-hundred, one-thousand, one-million, people are rushing after zeroes! They are fighting for zeroes; one for today, and some more to keep for tomorrow. No! This is the way of devils. This lesson is for people who are running after zeroes; who are running after nothing. We may show them that they may leave 'nothing,' and come to reality, the way of prophets. Don't keep zeroes!"

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Our Grandshaykh says, "In your opinions, you must come to Allah and His Prophet (peace be upon him). It means also, that you must come to a representative of Allah and His Prophet (peace be upon him), so that you can take the right answer from them. In every time there are, there must be in this world, some persons who are representatives for Allah and His Prophet (peace be upon him). You must ask them; they will judge.

"Two men may turn to Quran and hadith, looking for the answer to a particular problem or question. Each may read the same verses, yet each will interpret a different answer from them. Therefore, Allah says, 'Wattabi 'sabiila man 'anaaba 'ilayy' (Quran, Luqman-15). It means 'Follow in the path of him who has turned in repentance to Allah.'

"Repentance, real repentance, means to leave your ego's desires and turn to Allah. Therefore, we have been ordered to follow someone who has defeated his ego, and is living as his

Lord's sincere servant only. It is fard, and whoever denies this denies Quran.

"Each of us must follow a man who is on the way to Allah. If a man is not doing this, he is wrong; he is mistaken. You cannot go toward Allah without that person. You must follow! If a man won't do this, devils will lead him to their ways. Even though he says, 'I am Muslim,' he will be going after devils!

"No one can say, 'We are looking in books and we are going to Allah.' No! Here is a story:

"Imam Nawawi was a distinguished scholar (alim) who wrote a famous book about Hajj (the pilgrimage to Mecca), although he had never been there himself. It so happened that one year he at last had the chance to make the journey he had described in his book.

"When he returned he told of how it was. One day he was in Mecca walking along a certain way when a little boy came up to him and grabbed him by the arm. 'O, shaykh!' cried the little boy, 'You must not go that way.'

"Imam Nawawi was perplexed. 'What do you mean I can't walk here? How do you know this?' he asked the boy.

"'Because, O shaykh,' the boy returned, 'Imam Nawawi has told us in his book that we must go another way!'

"Therefore, we can see from that story that a man needs a guide when he is going to a place where he has never been before. A man may read Quran and hadiths, but still he cannot know the way to go unless he will take a guide. If it was enough to merely read Quran, Allah would have sent the Book alone. But Allah also sent the Prophet (peace be upon him) as guidance in front of the ummah (nation). In every age, the ummah must have a guide. If there is no guidance, a man's work will be unacceptable. Perhaps Satan will be leading him!

"Thus, Allah says, 'You must follow a man who is on My way.' But so many people are too proud to follow another man. They say, 'We know! We are reading Quran, we know sunnah, we are not in need of guidance!' They are wrong, because they are proud. Whoever comes to Allah with pride is refused, not accepted. Satan didn't accept Adam (peace be upon him) for his guide. He said, 'I know more than he. I am a better worshipper than he, and therefore I am not in need of his guidance.'

"The way begins with a guide. Everyone is free to take a guide or not, but Allah says, 'We didn't accept anyone without a guide. You must take a guide.' Therefore, for anything that

happens to us, we must ask the advice of a man who we trust is in the way of Allah. He is guide.

"This is fard (order of Allah), but nowadays, people are denying this. 'No Mashab (private ways), No Tariqat (Sufism)!' they say. They are wrong. Allah says, 'Wattabi 'sabiila man 'anaaba 'ilayy.' Follow in the way of he who has turned to Me in love. (Quran, Luqman, 15)

"If your heart and your conscience are satisfied with a person, there is no need to look for another. He is your guide. But you must choose someone; to deny this is kafir (unbelief). It is denying Quran.

"Shaykh Nazim," asked a murid, "how can we keep from arguing among ourselves when we aren't with you?"

"In every place," answered the Shaykh, "we shall appoint one person to be a director for our brothers. If a question arises, or if something happens, he shall decide among you. If he cannot find an answer, then he may write to us.

"Eastern people are like sheep; they agree easily and follow. Western people are learned people. Each looks to himself and says, 'I know something.' Therefore, they cannot agree; they are not coming together. They are like goats scattered about on the mountainside, each goat standing by himself.

"Just as we follow an Imam (leader) in prayer, so also must we follow in our lives. The Sahaba (companions) followed Rasul-ullah (peace be upon him). After his death, they followed Abu Bakr as-Siddiq (may Allah be pleased with him). Like this, we must have a leader to follow; an Imam for our lives.

"When people don't have a leader, or won't follow the one they have, quarreling and fighting result. This is how the Arabs were in the days before Rasul-ullah (peace be upon him) filled with pride and fighting amongst themselves. Insh'Allah (if Allah wills), there will be one Imam for all Americans, one for all Germans, one for all French, and so forth."

Shaykh Nazim continued, "When I was younger, I read and studied a great deal. Not only religion, Quran and hadith, but also 'European' knowledge, 'positive, objective knowledge,' as they called it at the university. So many books I read. Also I met several shaykhs and learned people, but my heart was not at peace with anyone until I met our Grandshaykh. When he was speaking, Ah! He was illiterate, but with his words he gave Divine knowledge; knowledge that I could trust one-hundred percent! I was at peace in his meetings. For forty years I was with him, and for forty years I tried to follow him. I am the

weakest person, but my intention was to follow him. I felt as though I were an ant with a broken leg trying to crawl from Damascus to Mecca; that is how I saw myself in our Grandshaykh's presence. But my hope was to follow him, as my Prophet says, 'The value of actions is according to the intentions behind them.' Therefore, I hope my Lord, Allah Almighty, will send me to where Grandshaykh is; to the Divine Presence; even though I am like that little ant. I accepted Grandshaykh as Allah Almighty ordered in Quran ('Follow him who has turned to Me with Love'). This is my intention. I intend to follow him, and I am interested only in that point. I left all my knowledge and intended to follow his way to Allah Almighty.

"Now, I am reading to you from his teachings. As much as I have trust in him, you may have trust in me. However much I am clutching his hand, you may clutch my hand as strongly. However much I am weak with him, you also will be weak with me. Thus, the Prophet (peace be upon him) was strongly with his Lord, and the Sahaba were strongly with the Prophet (peace be upon him). Anytime you are looking at a man who is clutching strongly at the Prophet's 'coat-tails' you may trust in him. However strongly you are believing, people may trust in you. However strongly you have trust in one man (your shaykh), people can trust in you also. This is important. Therefore, when you have trust in me, he will have trust in you, and another will have trust in him, also. This is the reason you must keep a relation with a person strongly in love with Allah. Then that love may come to you as well."

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Our Grandshaykh told me this story about his Grandshaykh, Abu-Ahmad as-Sughuri (may Allah be pleased with him): "My Grandshaykh was living in a village in Caucasia. One day as he was walking near his house, he saw a cat catch a neighbor's chicken and run off with it in its mouth. Quickly Abu-Ahmad (may Allah be pleased with him) said, 'Inna-lillahi wa inna ilayhi ra-ja'un!' This is a verse from Quran (sura Baqara, 156), and it is sunnah to say it when we are coming upon any bad thing, disaster, or affliction. It means, 'To Allah we belong, and unto Him we are returning!'

"'How many years have I lived in this village?' he thought, 'yet until now, I never saw a cat attacking a chicken before. I

must leave this village and these people. This is no mercy coming down here!"

"He made hijra to another village one-half hour's walk away where he lived for the rest of his life. He said, 'If there were no bad character in people, all the blossoms on the trees would bear fruit and none would fall to the ground.'

"What is the meaning of this story? Why did Abu-Ahmad (may Allah be pleased with him) leave his home because a cat ate a chicken? It is because he knew that the wildness of people's bad characters has an effect on their animals. The bad characters of the people in that village were going through their animals. They could be seen affecting that cat which, up until then, had never attacked any chickens. It is an important sign; when people's characters are good, it shows in their animals. When their characters are bad, there is badness and wildness in their animals also.

"Solomon (peace be upon him) once came upon two dogs fighting. As he was given the power to talk with all creatures, he asked them, 'Why are you fighting? You are dogs, not people! What can you take from this world that you will quarrel about?'

"Yes, O, Prophet!" replied the dogs, 'It is as you say. We haven't anything from this world. It is our owners' bad characters that you see fighting here!'

"You may see this quality in children as well. Hard people will have wild children, whereas soft, gentle people will have gentle children. Therefore, our good and bad characters have a pronounced effect upon all who are around us—our families, our neighbors, and our animals. We must carry a good view of our surroundings, not darkness. When Abu-Ahmad (may Allah be pleased with him) saw that cat acting wildly, he knew that the characters of the people in the village were no good and that it was time for him to leave.

"It is also people's bad characters that cause blossoms to wither and die without bearing fruit, and insects to infest them. In these times, how many medicines and chemicals are needed to make things grow! If people's characters were good, there would be no need for all those things! Now it is the twentieth century. People are proud of their learning and technology. But originally, before all the modern 'improvements,' people found life to be easier. All the things that make life easy were readily at hand. That satisfaction is lost now. It is impossible today to find any good people. Everywhere bad character is growing.

"Therefore, we must fight to erase, wipe-out (mahw), our bad character. The more we wipe out bad character, the more happiness will come down on that place. Nowadays, happiness is not coming down. Such dirty places! Everywhere there is cruelty. You cannot find one place to step on! This world is filled with wild characters, running after such a power to whip up all people. Such terrible weapons. It is a sign! When no mercy is coming down, it means that there are no good characters. Good characters are living in mercy oceans of Allah Almighty. Without belief in our Lord, there are no good characters and mercy in people. In unbelievers' hearts you cannot find a minimum of mercy.

"Today," said Shaykh Nazim, "a letter came to me. In it was a newspaper clipping perhaps from the London Daily Telegraph. It says how Marxism has killed one hundred forty-three million people: sixty-five million in Russia from nineteen-seventeen up until nineteen fifty-nine; sixty-three million in China! Other places total one hundred forty-three million! Because Marxism denies all prophets, all religions, and all Holy things, you cannot find any mercy in it. Marxists have no mercy for other people, not even for themselves. No mercy in Marxism!

"As we said," repeated the Shaykh, "good characters only live in mercy oceans where there is belief in Allah Almighty. Therefore, we must look after the mercy in our hearts to grow. As your mercy grows, you are approaching Allah. Abu Yazid al-Bistami (may Allah grant him more honors) was praying to his Lord, 'O, my Lord! You have power, You can do anything! I am asking to make my body bigger and bigger, till it will fill all Your Hell, so that there will be no place to put anybody else there! Put them in Paradise, and give me the punishment!'

"When your faith grows up, your mercy grows up. All Awliya have in their hearts oceans of mercy. Another one said, 'O, my Lord! Make me into a bridge over Hell, that Your people may pass over me into Paradise!' It is like that. If any of them have been given permission for 'shafa'a' (intercession) on the Day of Judgment, they are not going to let even one person go to Hell! This is the meaning of Iman. If a person says, 'I am a believer,' and he has no mercy, he is a liar. No mercy, no Iman.

"The biggest ocean of mercy is for our Prophet (peace be upon him). He was sent as a mercy for all creatures, the whole universe.

"Everyone will see his deeds on the Judgment Day, whether

they are going to Heaven or to Hell. Then Allah will decide. He may do as He likes. The Almighty is not obliged to pardon or to punish. He may, if He likes, pardon everybody."

"What about that man in Quran, Abu Lahab, and his wife?" asked one of our brothers. "Doesn't Allah promise a punishment for them?"

"That verse (sura Lahab) was sent only as a warning," replied Maulana, "so that people will not do like Abu Lahab. Allah Almighty will show each servant what he has done with his life on the Judgment Day. But He Almighty is free to give mercy as He likes.

"The Ummah, the nation of a prophet, is dearer to that prophet than children are to their parents. If you have one hundred boys, and ninety-nine are with you but one is in prison, are you happy? No! Because one of them is suffering punishment. Even if one out of one thousand is suffering, your heart is with that one who is suffering. Therefore, our Prophet (peace be upon him) will stand by the entrance to Paradise. How can he have pleasure in Paradise if his nation is in Hell! How?! He will stand by the entrance and when Allah Almighty says, 'Enter, O, Muhammad! He will say, 'O, my Lord! I cannot enter until my nation enters.' He will then look, 'One, two, three, four, . . .,' and if any are missing, he will say, 'O, my Lord! I cannot enter!'"

"Maulana, who are the Ummah? Who will be counted among them on the Judgment Day?"

"He Almighty knows," answered the Shaykh. "Don't be worried, European people, also, are his nation. American people, also; Russian people, also; Chinese people, also, Hindus, also, Negroes, also; all are of his nation! The Prophet (peace be upon him) says, 'If I am given permission, I will not leave one person behind!' Do you understand? You are coming home with your one-hundred boys, riding on your horses, coming up to the palace gates. You stop and count, 'Thirty, fifty, one-hundred boys.' When you see that they are all safely inside, then you will cross over the bridge, and close it behind you. You are not leaving one, two, or ten outside. No! Especially when they are little boys. Father will come and put little boys inside first, and then he will enter. Yes? Too many good tidings for us. We are like little boys. There is no worry for us. You are big boys? Mash'Allah!"

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One day, after the Dhuhr (mid-day) prayer, Shaykh Nazim told his murids that they could ask whatever questions they wished. The group consisted mainly of Europeans and Americans, and so they used this opportunity to question the Shaykh about difficulties they had encountered trying to practice his teachings in their own countries.

"Shaykh Nazim, what is our job in America? Why is it that we must go back there to live, away from you and your teachings?"

"Allah Almighty created this world," replied the Shaykh. "You can see here, all around you, the city of Damascus. Perhaps there are one hundred thousand houses. Each house has some people. Those people are not distributed without an arrangement but are appointed, each to a private place. These people must live in this place next door to some other people. They cannot be in this place too. Also, in each place, there may be several rooms; in each one there must be different persons. The Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) said, 'Allah created people, and made for each a private station.'

"Therefore, Allah decides for Syrians to live in Syria, Turks to live in Turkey, Americans to live in America, and so forth. In each state; some. In India, Madagascar, in every place, must live whoever Allah has appointed. He Almighty decided. He Almighty appointed.

"Our Lord decides movement, travel, also. Some travels are temporary, some are permanent. All are directed by Divine Wisdom.

"Allah Almighty appointed our breaths for us—when, where, and how many. We must be there, where He has appointed those breaths.

"Therefore, you will be in your homeland, as your Creator has appointed for you to be there. The important thing for every servant who knows his Lord, who believes in his Lord, who loves his Lord, is to be with Him everywhere and always! When a servant is with his Lord, with love, with belief, and with obedience, his Lord will be with him always, with His mercy, with His protection, and with His help! Enough?"

"Then why do we become disturbed in our hearts?" asked a disciple.

Shaykh Nazim answered, "Disturbances come when you are forgetting your Lord's relationship with you, when you are forgetting His mercy. When people forget that they are in mercy oceans, all disturbances and sufferings come into their hearts.

"They are like fish out of water oceans. To be happy, you

lectures from page

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badly of the Prophet (peace be upon him), and to be vicious? Sometimes Islam evokes very strong feelings in people."

"You must leave her!" said the Shaykh. "Not coming to discussion!"

"But not until you've done the other things first?" said a murid. "Not until you've been patient first?"

Shaykh Nazim nodded. "Yes," he said. "An important point. We must know that each person—their forelock—is in the hands of Allah Almighty. You cannot change people until Allah changes them. Even prophets cannot change people. If Allah is not changing, no one can change. The hearts of people are in the hands of Allah Almighty. Maybe Allah's will is going to change a servant; therefore He is sending her to you. If you have patience with her, your patience will bear fruit at the end, and she will come on your way."

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Our Grandshaykh says, "Allah likes His servants to be obedient, not stubborn and hard-headed. He never likes His servants to be hard-headed."

"This is because Satan's head was the first hard-head," said Shaykh Nazim, "and, whoever is walking on Satan's way will be Satan also!"

"Our Grandshaykh also says that the sign of a man who is not hard-headed is that he listens with respect to everyone. Clear? When a man respects everyone, and listens to them, regardless of whether they are young, old, or whatever, Allah Almighty promises to give to that servant a knowledge, a wisdom, from the speech of people. This is humbleness—to be soft-headed. Understand? You may find, from the words of those you listen to with respect, something useful to you. This is the reward for being soft-headed. This is a good manner, and a high character also. We must listen, for as the hadith tells us: 'You can take wisdom, even from little boys, and those you think are mad!' Divine knowledge: Respect all and listen to all. You are 'ribhan'—profiting. Good? Who can object to that? No one can object!"

A question: "Shaykh Nazim, you once said that if you go with people of bad character, you're going to carry some of that bad character with you. Likewise, if you go with people

of good character, you will acquire some of that good character."

"Yes," agreed Maulana.

"So, if that's true, isn't there a danger in listening to people?"

The Shaykh spoke, "Listening means that you may hear his words only. I don't mean to say that by listening, you must follow! I mean to say that by listening you can take a benefit from his words. Even if a man is speaking bad words, you may take something. You can look at how ugly it is to speak bad words. You can learn not to speak bad words by listening to those who speak them!"

"It makes me a little afraid," responded a murid, "because, sometimes you listen to people talk, and they just draw you right in."

Another advised, "You must watch. You must be a good watchman."

The first murid continued, "They're very seductive with their speech, and, as you listen, you find yourself starting to follow them. You don't want to, but you're not paying attention, I guess..."

Shaykh Nazim answered, "Don't be afraid of that. You must listen in order to take something useful from his words. If you can find it, that is your profit. Don't refuse a man's speech. If you listen with respect, Allah Almighty will give you a knowledge from his speech."

"Maulana, there's an ayat, I don't remember it exactly, but it says that if people are sitting and speaking badly about Islam, you must leave. You may only return when they change the subject."

"Yes," replied the Shaykh, "you are learning from their bad words how people are making themselves dishonorable and dirty. You must see that, and then escape. You will profit."

"On the other hand," Shaykh Nazim went on, "when a group of people are sitting for the sake of Allah and His Prophet (peace be upon him), the hand of our Lord is over them, protecting them. This was taught to us by the Prophet (peace be upon him). We are, for instance, sitting here in such a meeting. Here, over us is the hand of Allah Almighty protecting us. We are sitting under his protection. Therefore, our Grandshaykh says, 'If any danger, or dangerous event happens, then quickly sit somewhere in a group and make dua, dhikr, pray, or read Quran. That group will be under divine protection.'

"During the war there will be huge events, terrible events,

and very difficult situations. There must be two or three (or more), as a group praying. Then, no more fear for you; no more danger for you."

A murid asked, "Does it have to be a group? It can't be just one person?"

"It is promised for a group," said the Shaykh. "For two, or more; if they are sitting (for the sake of Allah), there will be a private protection. This is very important. If the meeting is for the sake of Allah and His Prophet (peace be upon him), there will be protection."

"Our Grandshaykh also said that, 'When a group is sitting for the sake of Allah and Muhammad (peace be upon him), then Allah Almighty will give them something—a Divine knowledge will appear in that meeting, one from which the whole group can take benefit. There will be "annayyah"—Divine help and care for them.'

"This meeting will be a holy meeting, and Allah will send to them His Divine help, and mercy, and protection, and also a Divine knowledge. It will appear in that meeting to guide them from all dangerous places and lead them to the Divine Presence. It will be protection from life's dangers, and those of the Resurrection Day as well. So many groups will be sitting for the sake of Allah and His Prophet (peace be upon him); they may be under Divine protection, here and hereafter. Only hard-headed people cannot take that benefit. Therefore, you must try to have meetings often, for any occasion."

A murid commented, "But not public!"

Maulana objected, "Why not public? You may do anywhere. If anyone comes to listen to you, he is not prohibited!"

"I remember, once, you recited the silsila in the London airport," said a disciple. "One fellow in the crowd heard it and came right over—whoosh!"

Shaykh Nazim smiled, "Yes! You may sit anywhere. If you are in a public place, and anyone is interested in coming, don't keep them away! 'Welcome, Welcome!' Understand? This is important, because, in meeting, our egos are coming into friendship. Originally, our egos are wild; they never like to be with others. But meeting tames the wild animals; wildness goes and becomes tame. There is mercy coming. It will be an attraction; they will come; even one may come. Three then becomes more powerful than two, yes!"

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Our Grandshaykh is teaching us another important manner: "Our Prophet (peace be upon him) ordered his nation always to be between hope and fear; to hope for His mercy, and to fear His punishment."

"Hope means that, if it is said that only one person will enter Paradise, you must hope that 'Perhaps I will be that one.' Understand?"

"And, if it is said that only one person will enter Hell, you must be afraid to be that person. Clear? This is to be between fear and hope!"

"Allah says that millions and billions will enter Paradise—we must hope to be among them. And, He also says that millions and billions will enter Hell—we must be afraid to be one of them. He Almighty says, 'Don't despair of My mercy,' because He may forgive all sins. This character makes people come into the right way. It is for every believer, not just for Muslims."

"Fear makes our wrong actions right—it gives rightness to people. So does hope. For if there were no hope, no one would come to correct himself. This means that there are never-ending chances for every person, every moment. If you hope for your Lord's mercy, you may quickly turn to Him. Allah says, 'O, My servant! When you return to Me, I am ready for you; even at the last moment of your life! When you say 'O, my Lord!' I say, 'O, My servant!' to you.'"

Shaykh Nazim then added, "Some people, most people, most Alims say that Allah Almighty is angry with us now. Our Grandshaykh says that Allah is not angry with us. He is not stopping his mercy for us. Mercy is coming down; all around is mercy. We are swimming in mercy oceans."

Someone asked, "But wasn't Allah angry with the people of Israel, for instance, when they worshipped the golden calf? Wasn't Moses (peace be upon him) angry?"

"Is Moses (peace be upon him) Allah?" said the Shaykh.

"Allah is angry by mouth, not by heart!" one of the brothers joked. There was general laughter.

Then, Maulana said, "Allah's anger is not like our anger. If we are angry with a person, we are cutting all things from him. But, Allah Almighty is sending mercy. How can He be angry? If He were angry, He would withhold His Rahmah, His mercy; but He is giving so much! Allah Almighty is angry toward those people who are judging His servants, yet He still sends His mercy."

"What about all those He destroyed in the time of Noah?"

Maulana answered, "He destroyed their bodies, not their

spirits. His Divine anger destroyed those bodies which were committing sins. When the body is destroyed, then the spirit is free and pure—going into mercy oceans and swimming.”

“But, Shaykh Nazim, won’t they still have their bodies on the Judgment Day?”

“These will be new bodies,” answered the Shaykh, “not bodies that made sins in this world.”

A murid said, “But which bodies will go to Hell to be cleaned?”

“He Almighty knows well which are going to Hell!” Maulana said.

“Do they suffer in the graves?”

“Yes,” replied the Shaykh, “it is like a man who falls from a second story window and breaks his head, his legs, and his neck; he may stay in the hospital one year, or six months, till he has recovered; then he comes out. He who makes himself wounded in this life with the spear of Satan will stay, for recovery, in graves and in Hell. When he is all right, he will go on to Paradise. What do you think about all those people in hospitals? Are they in mercy, or in punishment?”

Quickly, one murid said, “Mercy!”

While another said, “Punishment!” Again, we all laughed.

“Yes!” agreed Shaykh Nazim. “From one side they are in punishment, and from the other side they are in mercy. Their imprisonment is not as if they were in jail. It is mercy for them, as if they were in hospitals. You understand? Clear? This is from all religions, and all Holy books.”

A brother made this observation: “When you make a point, it seems clear until we ask questions. Then, as the answer unfolds, I realize that the point I thought I understood is so subtle that I don’t get it.”

Maulana answered him, “Yes, these are all like grains, like seeds. With faith in your heart, they will grow up. Then, you will see their flowers, and, after that, you will see their fruits, and then, at last, you will eat! Now, those are all seeds. Don’t be afraid.”

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This lesson is the ‘wasiyyah,’ or legacy of all grandshaykhs, not one, but all of them, for their followers, their murids:

Don’t say, “I know!” Say instead, “I try to know.” Clear?

They said this as their inheritance to us. Be a student always. Ask for learning. Don’t be a learned man, thinking that

you do not need to learn anything. You must always be a learner.

From where do our masters take this knowledge? From the hadiths of the Prophet (peace be upon him). He said, “You must ask for knowledge, from the cradle to the grave.” Be a learner!

Which kind of knowledge must we ask for? For this world? This life? No, we must ask instead for Divine knowledge. This is knowledge that makes us approach the Divine Presence. Don’t ask for the knowledge of this world, because if you are learning from Divine knowledge, the knowledge from this life is only one drop in an ocean. He who knows Divine knowledge may control natural powers; they will be under his will. He who doesn’t know Divine knowledge, on the other hand, will be controlled by natural powers! If you have Divine knowledge, it gives you power to control all natural powers; they will be under your command. Otherwise, natural powers will control you. You will be under the command of the forces of nature.

“Is that for the whole universe?” came the question.

Shaykh Nazim responded, “Yes, the whole universe. People may be kings, and people may be servants. Clear? The authority for this, in Holy Quran, is the verse, ‘O, people! We made all powers in Heaven and earth subject to your command!’ That verse gives that authority for Muhammad (peace be upon him) and his nation, for all. All things in the earth, and in the Heavens, were put under our command. Clear? It is a big verse, powerful. It means that we are controllers, not natural forces!”

A murid points to the tape recorder and asks, “Are things like this manifestations of this power?”

Shaykh Nazim replied, “Planes, cars, technological things; these are a little part. They are only on earth, these powers. But we have, also, such a power over Heavens, over the skies, and it is not with our bodies. We can control Heavenly subjects with our spiritual powers.”

“The majority of people in the Western world would say that spiritual power doesn’t exist, or if it does exist, that it is inferior to technological power,” said a brother.

The Shaykh responded, “It is because they made technological power an idol for worshipping. Nowadays, mankind is not bowing to anything but technology. They are making sajdah, like this (he gestures as if he were bowing to the tape recorder), yet they have invented that technological idol with their own hands. Technology—it is from man’s hands, man’s

doing! They are foolish, those who are making, then fearing what they made! They are stupid, if they think like this!

"They must know that man is higher than any technology. Even the most wonderful electronic mechanism now being made cannot work without man. The excellent electronic mind, is it? If a man does not operate it, it cannot go on. Man is highest. Every new invention is man-made. How can they be afraid, making idols?"

"But they think they are all-powerful," commented one murid.

"Yes," added another, "that's the Renaissance ideal, that man is the most important."

"Man is greatest, above all technology," said Maulana. "Any objection? We have such a power; technology hasn't such a power, because technology comes from our powers."

"But what if they worship themselves? What if they make themselves the idols, saying, 'Look at what we have done! We are all-knowing!' They don't believe in Allah," said the first brother.

Shaykh Nazim said, "Even if they do not believe in anything, they are stupid if they make technology an idol. How can they do that? How can they be right?"

"But aren't they really making themselves the idol?" asked someone.

"Themselves?" said Maulana. "That is another thing. We were speaking about technology being an idol."

"Well, that was the next point I was going to make," said the first questioner.

"They are very proud," said the second.

"They may even be proud," replied the Shaykh, "but, man is still higher than all technology."

"And," commented a brother, "they didn't create man, did they?"

"No," said Maulana. "Who created man?"

Then, someone said, "I was reading a story about a shaykh; I think he was a Nagshbandi shaykh, from the Sudan."

"Yes?"

"And, for twenty years, he fought the British. They finally defeated the dervishes after World War I, when they brought in airplanes and bombed them. So, the story I was reading made the point that the technological power of the British was superior to the 'primitive beliefs' and spiritual powers of the dervishes. They called it superstition, because that man was said to..."

"I know, I know," interrupted the Shaykh. "What do you mean to say with this?"

The murid went on, "That their spiritual power didn't mean anything, because the British had these guns and bombs."

Then Maulana said, "That shaykh hadn't any spiritual power. He hadn't! If he had, would those planes and bombs have come? Who said that shaykh had spiritual power?"

"He said that he had those powers. People followed him. When he was defeated, people said, 'See? There's no such thing as spiritual power.' Do you see what I'm saying?"

"Not right," said Maulana. "Not correct. If he had spiritual power, . . . they wouldn't see spiritual power. Quran tells, for example, and it is written in all Holy books as well, the story of King Solomon (peace be upon him) and the throne of Sheba. The power that brought that throne flying through the air in the blink of an eye; that is spiritual power! It is written in all Holy books, and in Quran, also. That person who brought the throne of the Queen of Sheba, he had Divine knowledge. With the power of that Divine knowledge, he brought that throne in the blink of an eye."

"Most people would say that story is untrue."

"They may say," replied the Shaykh, "but how can they prove that technology is higher than a man? To create a man is greater, or to make a computer? They must answer. People are free to believe or not, but they must bring authority for what they say. Whether they believe or not, who can say that a computer is more complete than mankind?"

Someone said, "What about test-tube babies?"

"They are liars," said the Shaykh. "They have no minds, these people! Who can accept that a computer is more complete than man? This is foolish. Man is the most excellent creature; no one may be more so. And, we are asking, from where does man come? We must ask that person who says technology is superior. He would say, 'From my father and mother.' Yes, then we must stop this 'From my father, from my mother, from my grandmother, etc.,' and we must ask him, 'This world, from what was it?' 'From the sun,' they say, 'and moon is a part of the earth,' they say also. Then we must ask, 'If earth and moon are the same, if they come from the same source, why is there nothing on the moon, and so many creatures on the earth?'"

"Because there is no atmosphere on the moon," offered somebody.

"Why?" said the Shaykh. "Why is atmosphere here and not there?"

"There's no shortage of theories for that!"

"Then they say that when earth was thrown from the sun, it was fiery, burning. We know that even one-hundred degrees centigrade will kill everything. When this cooled off, who planted the seed of life? From sun? Or, from Heavens?"

"People say that it was a natural chemical reaction," said a listener.

"They must say, 'A power planted!'" said Maulana.

The murid went on, "... oxygen, hydrogen, ..."

The Shaykh laughed, "A most powerful force made this, they must say. Because, even if you wait one-thousand years, if there is no seed planted, nothing will come. It is impossible. They must accept that an extraordinary power planted, so many things on earth, as He liked. Do they accept this or not?"

"No," replied the questioner, "they would say 'Billions of years.'"

The Shaykh said, "Even billions and trillions . . ."

"There does seem to be a rather large gap in their theories," the murid agreed.

Shaykh Nazim continued, "Man has been given extraordinary powers by his Creator. Technology is only a part of those powers, that authority to command the forces of nature. But man also has undiscovered powers—the powers of prophets and saints. You are asking for this power for your own use. It is not in our hands now. We are not ready to hold that power in our hands. It is like a boy wanting to fly a jet plane. He can't. You also have a plane, but you must learn how you can fly it. Man is a most strange creature, most wonderful creature. Therefore, we need to direct ourselves, to learn to use those powers, but we are not yet at this point. We have methods, coming to us from all prophets, to teach people to direct, to control, to command those powers. But still, we are under the command of the forces of nature. When we are able to command our own nature's force, then we will be able to command spiritual powers."

"Our natural forces command us?"

"Yes, individually. If a man is able to command, in himself, natural forces, then he may command, generally, all natural forces. The control of the universe is tied to control of ourselves. If a man cannot control himself, he never controls the universe!"

"Shaykh Nazim," asked a murid, "are there many men on earth who have such ability?"

"No. Very few. Very few people who control themselves. Very few. And the way of controlling ourselves was made clear by the prophets. We have that clear method with us also. If anyone is asking for that method, we have it."

"We're all asking!"

"Yes, you are asking," Maulana smiled. "You are like little boys. Step by step, you will reach to be . . . 'doctors,' to be 'engineers,' to be 'professors'; you are on the way."

"Do we have the time?" someone asked. "Is there still time for us?"

"Yes," replied Shaykh Nazim. "Sometimes it may be given in a short time. It may be given to some people in a few minutes, it may be given in a few hours, it may be given in a few days, months, years; it may not be given in his life. Yes. Some plants give in a few days, others take so many years to bear fruit."

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More questions: "Shaykh Nazim, how should I handle my children?"

"With children, you must deal with them like children."

"But I have no experience in that matter. I don't know . . ."

"With a big man, like a big man. With little boys, like little boys. With a learned man, like a learned man. With a common man, like himself. With each man on his level."

"How do I know when I'm on their level?"

"You must put yourself in their position. You must think, 'If I were that man, how would I act?' Even a judge, when he is going to judge a case, must put himself in the position of the defendant before he makes his decision, or he will be wrong. Understand?"

"Allah Almighty is the Judge of Judges," the Shaykh continued. "On the Day of Resurrection, He will show everyone all his actions, from the course of his life, and will leave judgment to that servant, to judge for himself. 'What is your judgment for that person whose life passed as you see it now?' He will say. Then, that servant will judge for himself. It is the spirit, the essence of judgment. If a man can judge for himself, it is exact justice. Therefore, when you're judging for someone in

your life, you must put yourself in his position, in his conditions. Then, you will speak for him, for her, for children, for older man, for everyone. Clear?"

"Yes. The thing that I get anxious about is whether I'm being too hard, or not hard enough."

"For whom?" asked the Shaykh.

"For the children," replied the murid.

Shaykh Nazim said, "The best thing for them is to be between fear and hope. Sometimes you must make them fear you, and sometimes they must have hope from you. Not always hard, and not always soft. You must use this side and that side, understand? Prophets, and our Prophet (peace be upon him), have been ordered by their Lord to sometimes give good tidings, and to sometimes give warnings."

To this, the murid said, "I don't know, yet, how I would do such a thing."

Shaykh Nazim said, "When you are back home, your inspirations will guide you. Don't be worried about that point."

Another disciple said, "About the dhikr that we do; fifteen-hundred 'Allah' at night, 'la illaha ill'Allah,' and the wird; is there anything else we should say?"

The Shaykh answered, "Enough. You may also say Salaawat."

A murid asked Shaykh Nazim a question about his family difficulties, and the Shaykh responded, "You have been guided. Wherever you may be there is guidance directing you. Don't be worried."

"When we are eating meat, how can we know if it is Halal?" a murid asked.

"When I first met our Grandshaykh," Shaykh Nazim replied, "I was also very strict, very particular, about my food. But he told me, 'It is not good manners to be like that. When you are a guest, you must not ask, 'Is this food clean?' No! You must give your host the benefit of the doubt. When you know that the food is pork, don't eat it, but say instead, 'I am a vegetarian,' or something like this. You must have good manners toward everybody. If you are in doubt as to whether meat (assuming that it is not pork) is halal or not, you may say, three times, 'Shahada,' and, seventy times, 'astaghfirullah.' Then, as you eat, and you say, 'Bismillah,' Allah Almighty will make that food clean for you, in the time it takes for you to raise it from your plate and put it in your mouth!'"

"When you are buying meat and you think that it has come in contact with pork, or utensils that have been used to handle

and prepare pork, you may wash it, and repeat the formula we just said. If you can obtain Halal (or Kosher) meat, of course it is best. But, when you are somebody's guest, don't ask! Even if it is known to you that they usually cook with lard, you must assume that, this time, for you, they cleaned their pots and pans and didn't use it. Only if you are certain that pork or pork products were used may you refrain from eating."

"Shaykh Nazim?" asked another brother. "My parents are very upset with my becoming Muslim. 'If you are looking for spiritual teachings,' they say, 'why can't you find them within your own religion?' My question is, are there teachers like you within other religions?"

"Once," said Maulana, "I was walking in the marketplace with our Grandshaykh, when a Christian priest came up to him, and kissed Grandshaykh's hand. Then, he gave salaams and went on his way quickly."

"Seeing my surprise, our Grandshaykh turned to me and said, 'There are others like him, Nazim Effendi, who wait secretly for Mahdi (peace be upon him) to come. They are hidden. The time is not yet come for them to be known!'"

"Therefore, we are saying that for a teacher to give authentic spiritual teachings, he must know the reality of Muhammad (peace be upon him)."

"Among the shaykhs and teachers, there are so many levels. They are like helicopters, jets, and rockets. Each flies at his level. It is not important for us to worry about so many levels. It is most important for us to conquer our nafs. That is the critical thing."

The Shaykh continued, "We must respect all men in their religion, for no one can know what is the relationship between a man and his Lord."

"Once, a great Wali was traveling on his way when he came across a shepherd who was bowed down in prayer. The Wali looked at the man's clothing, in which he had been working all day, and became annoyed."

"How can you pray like that?" he said to the shepherd. "Your clothes are dirty, and you smell like your sheep! Don't you know that you must pray in clean clothes?"

"The shepherd remained quiet for a minute, and then looked up, startled. 'O, Shaykh, forgive me!' he said. 'I did not hear what you said. I was tending my sheep when my Lord ordered me into sajdah, and just now He was speaking to me. Is there something I may help you with?'"

"When that Wali heard this, he became ashamed. 'O, my

Lord, forgive me for judging Your servant!' he cried, and threw himself immediately into sajdah."

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"Our Grandshaykh says, "The honor of a man is according to his Divine knowledge. As much as he has this Divine knowledge, he has high degrees and high ranks. Understand? Therefore, all prophets and saints have ranks, according to their Divine knowledge. Also, according to their Divine knowledge, they approach the Divine Presence."

Shaykh Nazim continued, "All prophets' and saints' ranks are given from our Prophet, Muhammad (peace be upon him). All knowledge, Divine knowledge, also comes from Muhammad (peace be upon him).

"He has been given the knowledge of past times and future times. You asked about the prophets before Muhammad (peace be upon him) do they know him? Yes, because Quran says that before prophets were sent to mankind from the spiritual world, they knew the last of prophets, Muhammad (peace be upon him). Allah Almighty said to them, 'He is the last, and the greatest prophet. If he comes during your time, then you are not prophets, you will be his followers! Do you accept this?' And they said, 'Yes!'

"Therefore, all prophets know our Prophet (peace be upon him). They believe in him, and order their nations to believe in him also, in order that they may complete their faith as prophets. They have ordered their nations to believe in all prophets, past and future."

"And they got their knowledge from him also?" asked a murid.

"Yes," answered the Shaykh. "He is the first prophet. He is the first creature that Allah Almighty created, the first one that He spoke to, and Divine knowledge is, therefore, coming to all prophets from the way of Muhammad (peace be upon him)."

"In other words," said a murid, "Muhammad (peace be upon him) was a mediator between Allah and the other prophets?"

The Shaykh answered, "Yes."

Another said, "There are many places in the Bible that speak of Muhammad (peace be upon him)."

"Yes," replied Maulana, "the station of Muhammad is

nearest to his Lord. No one, not even Gabrael can approach as Muhammad (peace be upon him) approached his Lord. Therefore, Gabrael took from Muhammad (peace be upon him), and gave to all the other prophets."

"When Muhammad (peace be upon him) was born," asked a brother, "did he know that he would be a prophet?"

"When he was born," replied the Shaykh, "he signed, with his hand, 'La'illaha ill'Allah Muhammad ar-Rasul-ullah.' At that moment, he was in sajdah! How could he not know?"

"He knew it, consciously, throughout his life," asked another. "As opposed to subconsciously? The stories we've read say that he didn't know until Quran started coming."

Maulana gestured toward a child, who was playing in the mosque. "That boy," he said, "knows that he is male, but the reality of that has not appeared to him yet. He knows that he is a boy, not a girl, but until he is fifteen years old, he will not know what the personality of a man is. In this way, the Prophet (peace be upon him) knew himself, but the appearance of his reality didn't come to him exactly until he was forty years old."

Someone repeated, "He knew he would be a prophet, but he didn't know what it would be like?"

"Yes," replied the Shaykh, "Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, 'I was prophet when Adam (peace be upon him) was yet a piece of clay!'

"These things belong to belief. You cannot force people to believe in anything. They are free; they may believe or not. We believe according to verses and hadiths, yes! All prophets' and saints' knowledge, beside our Prophet's knowledge, is as one drop to an ocean. All Grandshaykhs say this. All prophets say this. If any one objects to this point they may ask any prophet or any saint, if they say it is not true, we may change this. They may ask their prophets, they may ask their saints; they will get an answer. I am asking, and getting my answer."

"Allah gave to Muhammad (peace be upon him) an ocean. And Muhammad (peace be upon him) gave to all prophets and saints from that ocean! How much have they been given? If taken all together, it is like one drop beside Muhammad's ocean!"

"Does Muhammad (peace be upon him) have complete knowledge of Allah?" someone asked.

"Muhammad's knowledge is like an ocean for prophets and awliya," replied the Shaykh. "But, beside Allah's knowledge ocean, the ocean of Muhammad (peace be upon him) is only a

drop, a very small drop! Because Muhammad's ocean is limited, and Allah's ocean is unlimited.

"Our Grandshaykh said often, 'If you put a needle in an ocean, that needle is the knowledge of Muhammad (peace be upon him). When you take that needle out of the water, there will be a tiny drop of water at the tip. That tiny drop is like an ocean in front of all prophets and Awliya!'

"Therefore, we say that the Divine knowledge is an endless ocean. You cannot reach complete knowledge of Allah Almighty. Never! Shaykh Muhammad Salli asked me if the knowledge of prophets and saints stopped, or keeps on improving—it improves! It always improves! As much as our Prophet (peace be upon him) is improving, all prophets are also taking more and more."

"Where, in the afterlife?"

"Yes."

"Where are the prophets now? In Barzakh?"

"In Barzakh."

"In Barzakh, do they receive more knowledge from Muhammad (peace be upon him)?"

"No, Muhammad (peace be upon him) also takes more, and gives more."

"Muhammad (peace be upon him) takes more knowledge, too?"

"Yes, always."

"Still?"

"Still!"

"And the other prophets receive more knowledge, too?"

"Yes, also!"

"In Barzakh?"

"All of them!"

"Do you receive more knowledge?"

"Yes," replied Shaykh Nazim.

"Then acquiring knowledge is not finished in Barzakh?"

"No," said Maulana, "Allah's giving has no end. Allah is not like man, finished. If He is finished with His treasures, it means that He is like us. How could He be Allah, if He were like us? Everything with Him is endless. Knowledge is endless. He is giving, more and more. And we, here, do not know anything. When we go from this life, when we leave this body and enter in a new life, our spirits go into a knowledge ocean, following the Prophet (peace be upon him), to take more and more. No one leaves this life without taking knowledge. All of them are taking Divine knowledge after their death."

A murid asked, "But, then, why all the anxiousness?"

"To complete them," answered Shaykh Nazim. "To complete. Some people are going on donkeys, and some are riding in cars. Both of them are increasing their knowledge."

"Some people know," he went on, "and some people have been veiled; they cannot know to where they are approaching; where they are going. When veils are lifted, at the last moment when you are leaving this life, at that time you can know where you are!"

"How is it to be a shaykh?" asked a brother. "We don't know what a shaykh is, what your station is like. You are as you are, while we are as we are, and Grandshaykh is as he is..."

"For everyone, there is a station," said Maulana, "and, in that station, some are ready to fly up, some are getting ready, and some are not ready. For rockets there is a base, a platform upon which they sit until take-off. For each person also there is a base, a station, and his rocket is being put on it. Some people complete their work during their lives. Then, they are sent!"

"While still alive?"

"Yes," replied the Shaykh. "Those who 'die before they die.'"

"For them, it is increasing now?" someone asked.

Shaykh Nazim answered, "Yes, but so many people are sleeping. Their rockets are still on their bases; until the end of their life comes. Then they will be thrown by Divine force!"

"Maulana, did the Grandshaykh, throughout his long life, get more knowledge, new knowledge, every day and every night?"

"That knowledge belongs to our spirits," said Maulana.

"Yes," the murid went on, "but did he get more knowledge every day and every night?"

"Every hour, every moment."

"More and more?"

"More and more," said the Shaykh, "but that knowledge, what is its benefit? It makes man approach the Divine Presence, and you cannot know which person is approaching."

"Our Prophet (peace be upon him) was in the Divine Presence day and night," continued the Shaykh, "but, he was sitting with his sahabas. Who could know that he was in the Divine Presence? Only a few sahabas; even one of his wives who was sleeping with him but where was the Prophet (peace be upon him)? Was he with her, or was he with his Lord?"

Shaykh Nazim paused for a moment, and then went on, "Yes, it is an unknown thing. Perhaps you are in the Divine Presence, but there are no signs. He Almighty knows, and if He is giving some signs, you may know. This knowledge is yet for our bodies."

"That which we are getting now?" a brother asked.

"Yes," replied the Shaykh. "Now, we are learning letters. We have not yet reached the point where we can put those letters side by side for reading. No, this that we are doing now is as a practice which must be done first. Then, you will know. When your old ways will go away, a new world will appear to you; one you never saw before! You will approach the 'lay'ill ma'fuz' (the 'preserved tablet' where all things are recorded.) Finished!

"Isn't there danger in that?" asked a murid. (Everyone laughed.) "Someone once told me that when you see all those beautiful things, you should be careful not to get caught up in them; that they'll catch you along the way, that you can get caught in the garden!"

"Who said that?" the Shaykh asked. A certain fellow was named. "Yes, yes!" the Shaykh smiled, and then continued, "It is only a description! It will be more different from this life, from this world. It will be very beautiful, very enjoyable for your spirit; not like this dirty world. It is very clean, beautiful, joyful—exact happiness, no harm, no bad things, no death, no ugly things!"

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Our Grandshaykh says, "Knowledge is an endless ocean. All things that belong to Allah Almighty are endless, and Allah is teaching His servants so many different kinds of knowledge. Some of this knowledge originated at the time of Adam (peace be upon him), and has come down to our times. It is a huge body of knowledge, but it is very small compared with the knowledge that saints know about from before the time of Adam (peace be upon him)."

Shaykh Nazim continued, "Now, from Adam (peace be upon him) up until our time, there is Divine knowledge, held by the Awliya. But, before the creating of Adam (peace be upon him) there was so much knowledge, according to those who know. This knowledge, the knowledge that we have about our own era, is only like a drop from an ocean!"

"This makes our heads turn! What was there before Adam (peace be upon him)? Thinking of these things makes man humble, not able to say 'I know all!' What do we know? Only a little drop from oceans, no more."

A brother asked, "Was Adam (peace be upon him) the first man, or, was he the first man of this batch of men, of which we are a part?"

Shaykh Nazim answered, "We are coming to that now. Our Grandshaykh said that this is the period of our father, Adam (peace be upon him), and his sons. We are living in it now. But, before our father's period, so many Adams have been created - no one knows how many except Allah Almighty, the Creator! No one knows their number!"

A murid asked, "Were these . . ."

"Adams," supplied the Shaykh.

"... Adams," repeated the questioner. "Were they like us, or were they different?"

"Like them," answered Maulana. "Each Adam, and his sons, were generally like us, in that they may be recognized as sons of Adam. All are servants of our Lord. Also, He Almighty, alone, knows how many Adams will come after us, how many periods there will be. Not on this world, because Allah Almighty has so many universes beyond counting.

"He is creator," Maulana continued, "creating. To create means to make them appear. They are hidden; to create is to make them appear. We were hidden in His power oceans but now He makes us appear. When our period is finished, we will go back into that power ocean, to be hidden again. We are going to another station in that power ocean, Paradise. Paradise is also in His power oceans. They are swimming in His power oceans and in His mercy oceans, living, enjoying. When we disappear from this appearance, then we shall be in mercy oceans, enjoying."

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"Our Grandshaykh says, 'Allah Almighty was addressing those Adams that were created before our father, Adam (peace be upon him) with the secrets of Holy Quran. Quran, the Holy book, contains endless secret knowledge. Its secrets are such that you can find, included in it, all news from before and after us.'"

Someone asked, "When the Quran is translated into English, are all the secrets lost?"

Shaykh Nazim answered, "From translations you can take only a little part. What is a translation? It is like you and your photograph. What is the relationship between them? Are you the same as your picture? One may look at the photograph, and know that it is you, but . . . Do you prefer to take the photograph of your wife to sleep with, or her? The original and the translation is like this. Now, Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is translated into German. Is it the same? It cannot be. It is only an appearance without spirit!"

The Shaykh continued, "Our Grandshaykh says that secrets of Holy Quran will appear in the time of Mahdi (peace be upon him). Jesus (peace be upon him) also said, 'The secrets of Holy books will appear at the end of our period when Mahdi (peace be upon him) comes.' Quran is addressed to all and speaks to all. No one can be excluded from the Quran's address. It is for everyone, generally and individually.

"There are seven heavens—no planets, but seven flats of heavens, and so many creatures, most of them angels."

A disciple asked in surprise, "You say there are no other planets?"

"Everywhere, there are so many creatures," said the Shaykh. "Nothing is empty. Everything is full-up with servants of our Lord, worshipping and giving respects to their Lord."

"Maulana, is this the only place there are disobedient servants, Satan, etc.?"

Shaykh Nazim replied, "This is for the sons of Adam (peace be upon him). When the secrets of Holy Quran appear, it means we shall be in contact with Heavens, that people will be in contact with their Heavenly positions.

"Our Grandshaykh says that the Holy Quran is written in the Divine Presence, but not in the words and letters that we use here. It is written in a manner that is impossible to speak about. You cannot describe it."

A murid points to some copies of Quran, and says, "Then these books are not the real Quran?"

Maulana answered, "In the Divine Presence, it is completely different writing."

"The same words?"

"It is different, quite different. That is the secret Quran, in the Divine Presence. It belongs to Allah Almighty, eternally.

"Now," continued Shaykh Nazim, "we are coming to that question you asked that Alim, that Shaykh, last night. (He was

referring to a discussion some of the murids had at dinner the night before. They had been the guests of a scholarly shaykh who lived in Damascus.) Here, our Grandshaykh asks, 'When Allah said, I am Allah! (Inna an'Allah—He is the first, eternal, no beginning and no end for Him); to whom did he say, 'I am Allah?' Was he Allah for Himself? It is impossible. The king is not king for himself. He is king for his people. Allah to whom was Allah? Without anything He was Allah? Do you think so? Servants need Allah, but Allah does not need to be Allah for Himself.

"We need Allah for ourselves. But Allah has no need for Himself to be Allah. Allah is the Creator, isn't He? He became Creator after a time, or was He Creator? He was Creator! All His attributes are eternal. All things belonging to Allah, His attributes exist with Him eternally. If a thing came later, it would not be fitting to be a Divine attribute. He is not like us. We have beginning; from weakness we grow, becoming stronger. We are illiterate and then we learn. But Allah? He is not like His creatures. The Creator has completeness forever—Perfection. He was Creator at the beginning. Was He Creator without creatures? You think so? You are wrong. How can you say that Allah is Creator and had no creatures? Is it only a title, without meaning? No, He is the owner—'Rabbil alameen.' He is Lord, 'Rabb,' He was Lord for 'alameen,' for all. When was He the Lord? He was Lord at the first, and at the last. He *is* Lord, arranging His creatures, and giving them directions to their destinations. Without any servants how can He be Lord of creatures?

"Therefore, when we say, 'when He created,' it means that all creatures were hidden in His mercy oceans. When He wills, when He orders creation, He makes them appear. All the universe was in His mercy oceans. It was in His power oceans, hidden, without appearance. Creation makes it appear. Understand?"

A brother said, "So we, His servants, always were? Is that correct?"

"Always," replied Maulana.

"And always will be?" the brother asked again.

Before the Shaykh could answer, another asked, "Before this was made manifest, when we were hidden in the mercy ocean, was there any awareness of existence?"

"We are coming to that," answered Shaykh Nazim. He continued his talk: "Is there anything you can imagine that is out of His power? Or, is there anything out of His mercy? He

says, 'My mercy is around all things.' Therefore, it encompasses all things—finished. Did any other creature buy us from Him? Did they capture us from Him, and bring us here? What are you saying—not thinking?

"This is a very deep ocean, but Al-Hamdulillah, with the power of Grandshaykh makes it easy to understand. He says, '*La illaha ill'Allah* is written eternally. *Muhammadin Rasul-ullah* is written in eternal existence, also. Allah wrote, in His Divine Presence, also, *La illaha illa anna wa Muhammadin Rasuli*! This means, 'I am your Lord, and Muhammad is My servant and My Prophet!'"

"Shaykh Nazim," asked a murid, "when you said that there were countless Adams before us, were there also countless Muhammads?"

"Just one," answered the Shaykh.

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Our Grandshaykh says that in our time no one from among the Awliya has been given permission to speak about secret knowledge except him. He may speak Quranic secrets. He says also that Allah Almighty opened to Muhammad (peace be upon him) the ocean of secrets of the Holy Quran, and He is also opening it to Mahdi (peace be upon him), and giving to him from that secret knowledge of Quran. Mahdi (peace be upon him) is given seven hundred kinds of knowledge over the knowledge of all saints! No one has yet been given such as Mahdi (peace be upon him) has been given. Because he is coming to address all people, it will be enough to correct and direct all people on to their destinations."

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It is from secret knowledge that our Grandshaykh says that Allah Almighty wrote His Name and His Unity (*La illaha ill'Allah*) firstly, and no one can know the time it was written. At the same time it was written, '*Muhammadin Rasul-ullah*.' As Muhammad (peace be upon him) was Prophet, he was also his Lord's servant. This is very important—that Muhammad (peace be upon him) was worshipping his Lord at the same time that he was Rasul-ullah. No one, except his Lord, knows when he began worshipping his Lord. Muhammad (peace be upon him) was the servant of Allah Almighty from the beginning. No one knows that beginning. It is in eternal existence.

"We are saying," continued Shaykh Nazim, "to whom was Allah in eternal existence? Who was in the Divine Presence that Allah was speaking to, who was He addressing? He was Mohammad (peace be upon him). Muhammad (peace be upon him) was His servant and His Prophet in eternal existence. Other prophets were under the flag of Muhammad (peace be upon him), worshipping their Lord, also."

Maulana continued, "When a prophet comes, he makes wrong things correct. He doesn't destroy good things also. Such a person is a devil, not a prophet. You may look in history; everytime people were becoming like animals, Allah Almighty sent them a prophet to keep them on the right way, and to keep their honor—to correct people's wrong actions. All prophets came just for that purpose. If anyone says that after Muhammad (peace be upon Him) there is a prophet, we must look at what he did. Nothing! If they are saying Bahaii is a prophet, we must ask what he did. Did he correct wrong things in people, or did he make them more wrong? If a man claims prophethood after Muhammad (peace be upon him), he must show us what good thing he did for mankind. Bahaii? Show us what he did. The followers of Muhammad (peace be upon him) number millions and millions, and many people are correcting their wrongs when they follow him. But who corrects his way from Bahaii? They are drinking, they are eating dirty things, they are doing dirty actions. They are not preventing zina, adultery! How will it be a correction for people to follow that way!

"We understand that prophets and religions are sent to give us a control on our nafs, to give people a power for controlling themselves. This is the meaning of religions, and the purpose of prophethood. As our Prophet (peace be upon him) said, 'I came just to complete good character, and to save people from bad character. And, no one can reach good character until he can control himself, his ego.'

"This is because egos' characters are all the worst characters. If a man cannot control himself, his character is the worst; he will be worse than wild animals."

"Shaykh Nazim," said a murid, "in America, a man may say, 'I can do whatever I like as long as I'm not harming anyone else, and I am still a good man.'"

"If he is a good man," answered the Shaykh, "he cannot harm himself, either. How may a man who destroys his house with his own hands be a good man? He who burns his house, his family, is he good?"

"People say this," the murid insisted.

Maulana replied, "He may go to the jungle to make himself free! Understand? In jungle, freedom; no one says 'No.'"

"But that's the kind of questions they ask!" the brother said.

"He may ask question," said Maulana, "we shall give answer; 'O, guy! You may be in jungle, free! Not here, O, guy! You may go to jungle, where animals are free like you!' (Everyone is laughing.)"

"We have a method from our Grandshaykh. You must not argue with a man, if you know that you are on the right way, if you know that rightness is with you. If that person doesn't accept, don't tire yourself in arguing with him or trying to teach them. *Don't argue with hard-headed people. Leave them!* You must be like rivers; when a hard rock is in the way, you must go around it. You must not stop with hard-headed people. Change your way to a soft one. In the time of our Prophet (peace be upon him), he left hard-headed people, and so many sahabas came and accepted him. 'Argument,' says our Grandshaykh, 'extinguishes the light of faith.' Therefore, it is prohibited.

"This is a very important point! Because, nowadays, men are proud of their knowledge, of their thinking. No one is humble enough to listen to another. Everyone says, 'I know!' Therefore, you may find so many arguments everywhere. Quickly leave that argument; no baraka, no blessing from that meeting. There is no 'innaya,' no Divine help. Therefore, you must leave it. Understand? The example of the river is very good for us. It is an important lesson for us, because arguing is wasting your time, wasting your energy, and wasting your faith, also!"

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Our Grandshaykh is explaining to us the reality of mankind, the sons of Adam (peace be upon him): "Our bodies have no life without spirit. Also for our spirit there is again a spirit. And then for that spirit there is also a spirit. No one knows what is the reality of spirit. What is spirit? No one can explain it. There is no description for the spirits of men. And no one can know the spirit of our spirit except Allah Almighty.

"We were already with our spirit's spirit in the Divine Presence, when Allah Almighty said, 'La illaha ill'Allah, Muhammadin Rasul-ullah.' We were in the Divine Presence; our spirit was there."

Someone asked, "How many spirits?"

Maulana answered, "Three: spirit, spirit's spirit, and spirit's spirit's spirit! The third spirit was in the Divine Presence when Allah said, 'La illaha ill'Allah, Muhammadin Rasul-ullah.' We accepted that, and we were His servants from that time. Those spirits belong to Divine stations, it is out of time and space. When a thing is out of time and space, you cannot give any description for it: It is impossible."

"When Allah said, 'La illaha ill'Allah, Muhammadin Rasul-ullah,' was that out of time and space?" asked a brother.

"Yes."

"So, when you say, 'We have been serving him ever since,' you don't mean 'ever since,' as in time?"

"Now, we are in time and space," said Maulana, "we cannot understand."

"But it doesn't mean the same thing if Allah said it yesterday, does it?" the murid wanted to know.

"No," replied the Shaykh, "no time, no space in Divine Presence. Therefore, people lose their understanding. They are trying to bring all the realities into time and space. How can you put an ocean in a glass? It is impossible. How can you bring realities from out of time and space into time and space? But we believe only that our origins are out of time and space, that we have been caught from that Presence and brought here to this world."

"The mercy oceans are out of time and space?" asked a brother.

"Yes," said Maulana. "Yes. All things belong to Allah. Allah Almighty is out of time and space, and we are His servants out of space and time, also. We are worshipping Him, timelessly and endlessly.

"Do you think that we came from that Divine Presence with our whole originality, our whole personality? Never! We are like one ray coming from the sun. We are, in our originality, in reality, still in the Divine Presence. Not moving, out of time and space there is no moving. We are worshipping, continuously. Here, in this life, there is only one ray, from that timeless 'sun,' for us. We are here for a little time, only.

"There are so many things you have yet to hear. Now, nothing. When you break your prisons, you will be free and you will catch your personality. At that time you will know your Lord; not now. Our worshipping is going on, without stopping, out of time and space. We are always in the Divine Presence for service. Prophets have come to us to open that door through which we can look at our realities. We have realities in the

Divine Presence. (Haqqiqat) Step by step, if you are going, it will open for you to look at yourself, to know yourself. As of yet, you don't know yourself!

"Our Prophet (peace be upon him) says, 'When you know yourself, you will know your Lord.' We don't know ourselves; we need a Divine mirror to look in to see ourselves. You are asking why we are coming to this life. It is to be witnesses of ourselves! We were in Divine oceans; no time to look at ourselves. When we come to this world, there is no time to look to that position; now, we are all looking to ourselves. We have been sent to attain perfection, to look at ourselves and say, 'We are something, also!' We recognize ourselves now.

"These things," Maulana went on, "all that I am saying to you, is like trying to describe the taste of honey. Yet, you have never tasted it. When you will taste, you will know. More than this description I cannot make until you taste it by yourself. Then . . . (he puts his finger to his mouth, as if tasting) . . . 'It's honey!'

"How can I describe for a little boy what it means to be a perfect man? Can you describe anything about the attributes of a perfect man to a three-year-old boy? A five-year-old boy? Can you describe it? Never! He may sleep with ten girls; nothing. He knows nothing, and you cannot describe to him, yet, what it will be like. But when he reaches the age of perfection, he will know! Understand? Now, we are saying, 'Like this, like that.' We must wait to reach that age; then you will taste.

"And this is the way for tasting; there is no other. You can't find it. So many devils, making such wrong ways; making people most foolish also! No one is coming for dunya to this masjid. No, you are asking valuable things. You are asking to know yourself, and my Grandshaykh is ordering me to tell about all ways, directing you to your stations in the Divine Presence. You are asking me if I know your positions in the Divine Presence. I know who is sitting on my right side, on my left side, in front of me, behind me, around me; I know!"

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PART THREE

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Our Grandshaykh says, "Allah says that He has all power, and that His servants are powerless. Only Allah has absolute power. Now, people are saying, 'We have power!' They don't accept their powerlessness. Therefore, they cannot reach any target in their lives.

"All the universe needs power to work. Without power, nothing moves, nothing stands. The smallest atomic particle—from where does it get the huge amount of power it needs to exist?

"Allah, nothing else, is giving this power to all the universe. All things, from the smallest to the biggest, are receiving from the endless power oceans of Allah Almighty. Only the Creator can say. If He withheld that power for even an instant, everything would vanish!

"Who gave prophethood to prophets? If Allah didn't give prophecy, they would be ordinary people. Sainthood is also a power given by Allah Almighty. So it is for all creatures; each has a power given to it by Allah. From where does the ant get his huge strength? The elephant his huge size? There are countless insects, countless creatures in the oceans; each has been given a private destination and corresponding power from Allah's endless power oceans.

"Muhyiddin ibn'Arabi (may Allah be pleased with him) spoke about 'Malakut,' describing it as the Divine power that accompanies all things. He said that this power is in our Lord's hands, and that it is within everything that is in existence. His kingdom is going on everywhere, from the smallest to the biggest.

"Allah is the main power station for all creatures. Therefore, Muhammad (peace be upon him) asked his Lord, 'O, my Lord! Don't leave me to myself! If You leave me to myself, I will perish!' The Prophet (peace be upon him) had exact knowledge of this point. Therefore, he was asking for Divine help and Divine power every second, every moment, in all conditions throughout his life. If a man knows this point (yaqin), he knows that as much as you are powerless, you must ask from your Lord.

"All Divine help, all Divine power, comes to weak people more than to powerful people. As much as you are in need, as much as you are opening to Allah, help is coming. If you don't feel in need of your Lord, you will be left to yourself, and you will perish.

"O, my Lord, every second, I am in need of Your Divine help! Don't leave me for even the blink of an eye to my nafs, or I will perish! This is a most important thing to know. Very few people possess this secret.

"Now, learned people depend on their knowledge, rich people on their wealth, powerful people on their power. This is wrong. I am always asking my Lord for power to explain these realities. Without it, I am nothing. If a man claims, 'I am clever!' he is stupid-clever. Don't be this way. He who claims, 'I know! I am a learned man!' he is an ignorant-learned man. He who claims, 'I am rich! I do not need anyone for anything!' he is a poor-rich man."

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"This my Grandshaykh taught me," said Maulana. "The Prophet's hadiths are equal to and have the same rank, as Quran. We must respect the hadiths as much as we respect the Holy Quran's verses. They are an explanation of Quranic verses. In hadiths the Prophet (peace be upon him) did not speak for himself, but with revelation from Allah Almighty. If Allah didn't permit it, he couldn't speak. Therefore, we respect the words of the Prophet (peace be upon him) as much as we respect the words of Holy Quran."

Someone asked, "Does this mean that we should make wudu before reading a book of hadiths, as we do for reading Quran?"

Maulana answered, "If we are asking real goodness from any religious book, we must not take it without wudu. Without wudu, we are not on the right way. Our Prophet (peace be upon him) advised us always to have wudu because it is the weapon of Muslims against devils. Devils cannot approach a man who has wudu.

"Our Prophet (peace be upon him) explained Holy Quran according to our capacity," the Shaykh continued, "because the Quran is Allah's word while hadiths are the Prophet's words. Our Prophet (peace be upon him) is from mankind like

ourselves, and so his words are easier for us to understand. Therefore, he is explaining the intricacies of Quran to us."

A murid asked, "How do we know if a hadith is authentic?"

Shaykh Nazim replied, "If a trustworthy Alim says or writes in a book that such and such is a hadith, you must believe. For example, al-Ghazzali (may Allah be pleased with him) wrote many books containing many hadiths. Some people consider some of these hadiths to be weak, but we are not in agreement with this thinking. We believe Imam Ghazzali (may Allah be pleased with him) to be a gigantic alim, a 'king size' alim. He is not an ordinary alim; he is true and trustworthy. Therefore, we trust in all hadiths that he has written.

"If you find any learned man in whom your heart believes and trusts, you must believe any hadiths he tells you. This is the way of students and also of common people, for hadiths. But Awliya, to whom Allah Almighty has given light, are different. They may listen to a man and see if light is coming from his speech. Then, they may know if his words are correct. Also, when Awliya are reading, they may see those hadiths which are exact, shining from the page. They are the words of the Prophet (peace be upon him), coming with light, filled with light. When a man can see this, he is not in need for the opinions of another as to which hadith is strong and which is weak.

"So many Alims are denying this or that hadith while Awliya say that those hadiths are all right. Thus, we take hadiths from those people who have the light of Iman in their hearts showing them the truth. Also, if any book has hadiths from the Prophet (peace be upon him), we accept it out of respect for the Prophet (peace be upon him). If it is an incorrect hadith, there is no responsibility for us if we accept it. This is a high adab, or good manners. If someone says, 'This is a hadith,' we believe it out of respect to our Prophet (peace be upon him)."

Someone asked, "So, until we receive that higher vision that the Awliya have, we must accept all hadiths as true?"

"Yes," said Maulana, "if you are not doing this, you cannot go forward, no! If we read it in a book, hear it from an Alim or from a man, out of respect for our Prophet (peace be upon him) we must believe it."

"You mean, we cannot question the source?" said a murid.

"No," Maulana answered, "it is no good. To agree, to say, 'All right' is better. But it is difficult to do this. It is a sign of

a clean heart to say, 'All right.' If a man's heart is not clean, he will ask, 'From where is this? From where is that?' So many questions! It shows that his heart isn't clean. As much as he questions, so much is his heart filled with doubts."

"Are there many collections of hadiths that are valid?"

"So many," said Maulana. "All of them. Any book that is written as hadiths of Prophet (peace be upon him), we must believe. This is my way (madhhab)."

"But now have you reached the point where you can see the light coming from the true hadiths?" asked a disciple.

The Shaykh replied, "Ahh, yes. But you cannot reach that point until you believe every word and saying that is hadith. This way will take you to that point; to look . . . Lights! It is very difficult to accept this."

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Shaykh Nazim said, "Our Grandshaykh also told me another important point. It is about the importance of dhikr—the importance of remembrance of Allah.

"He said to me, once, 'O, Nazim Effendi! All ranks, or spiritual levels, that a man may reach in this life and the next life will be reached by remembrance of Allah with dhikr. Dhikr means to be with Allah Almighty always; in all situations all the time. So many people are saying, 'Allah! Allah!' but when they are acting they are not with their Lord; only their tongues. Understand? It is not important to say, 'Allah!' It is important to remember, always, that He is with you. When you are looking, He is with you. When you are walking, He is with you. When you are sitting, He is with you. When you are speaking, He is with you. When you are thinking, when you are eating, when you are sleeping, He is with you. He is not going to leave you. This is dhikr!'"

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My Grandshaykh taught me: "The highest degree of miracles for a person, what is it? It is to keep the way of his Lord firmly so that any time his Lord looks after him, He will see him on his Lord's way. He will see him on the correct way—moving towards Him. If you catch a thing, it must be forever, without

leaving it. If you catch something in your hand, no one must take it from you; even if they cut off your hand. Our Prophet (peace be upon him) said, 'In those times (He was referring to the times we are living in, today), it will be more difficult for a man to keep religion, to keep belief in his hand than to keep fire in his hand!' It is so difficult, but you must keep it."

"What about a man who gives up his religion?" someone asked Shaykh Nazim.

"It is like a man who had a ruby in his hand and threw it away," answered Maulana. "He didn't know the value of what he had. If he knew, he wouldn't leave it."

"So," the brother said, "that man never really knew what he had?"

"Yes," the Shaykh answered. "If he knew, how could he leave it? If a man has a diamond in his hand and knows it, he will not give it up even if they cut his hand.

"Our Grandshaykh told me a story that took place during World War I. Some soldiers from one side were chasing a soldier from the other side. They came to a river, where they finally caught him, and took his rifle away. When the soldier who took the gun examined it, he found that the stock was filled with diamonds! When his comrades, who were in need of weapons, tried to take the captured rifle from him, that soldier wouldn't give it up. He struggled so hard to keep it that seven men couldn't get it away from him. Finally, our Grandshaykh persuaded him to let them have the gun, saying, 'O, my brother! We are not the enemy! We are your comrades, and we need that gun to defend ourselves!'"

"Your service to your Lord should be like that. You must not leave it. No one must take it from you. This is the biggest miracle for Muslims, for believers. When you know that an order, a faith, an action, or a religion is true, you must keep it forever, until the end. Don't leave it!"

"This belief that we are holding in our hands," said a murid, "can you pass it along to others, also?"

"Yes," said Maulana. "You may look in your hand and say, 'So many diamonds! Look! Each of you may take one and keep it! You must advise them.'"

"Must people ask for that knowledge?" said another.

"If someone asks you," replied the Shaykh, "you may give to him, if you know. If you are with your Lord, you will be able to answer him. You will not be alone if you are making dhikr. Allah says in Quran, 'You must ask from those who are in remembrance with Me.' If you are with your Lord, anyone

can ask you any question; your Lord will put answers on your tongue."

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"For each act of worship that Allah or Prophet (peace be upon him) has ordered, Allah Almighty opens a door from His mercy for those who perform that worship. It is a reward for them from their Lord. There are five hundred kinds of worship, or five hundred different acts of worship and goodness. According to a servant's capacity, he may do as much as he is able. All of them are to please Allah only. This is our target, to make our Lord pleased with us.

"He is pleased with us when we do goodness, but He is not pleased with us when we leave worship and do badness. For each worship, there is a special mercy coming. That door is opening into this life from time to time, and if a servant meets that opening time, he can reach his Lord's Presence very quickly at that moment.

"For example, Allah Almighty gave the order for the Layla'til Qadr, the Night of Power. It is only once in a year, and during that night there is only a second in which the Divine Presence occurs. At that time, the Heavens open and you will see all things in sajdah to their Lord. If a man is ready at that time, he may reach everything he may ask. People who know the value of that moment may wait every night throughout the year; not just during Ramadan.

"Our Grandshaykh says that, in a similar manner, there is a special mercy for each kind of worship; for each fard, and for each sunnah of Rasul-ullah (peace be upon him) that a servant may observe continuously, not leaving it. There are five hundred kinds of worship and you do not know from which worship that mercy may open. Therefore, we do not leave one and skip to another! Allah's reward to us is according to our intent."

A brother asked, "Which worship is the most valuable?"

"Only Allah knows," was the Shaykh's reply. "You cannot know with which worship, or with which goodness He may be pleased with us. Layla'til Qadr is only one of five hundred kinds; four-hundred-ninety-nine other mercies come for other goodnesses! No one knows when a Divine mercy is coming, or for which practice there may be a reward. It may come anytime, day or night, winter or summer, before, during, or after Ramadan. He who asks for the Night of Power uses every night. Maybe the night he sleeps is that Night!

"Therefore, we must keep to a practice and not leave it. 'This is the biggest miracle,' says our Grandshaykh. 'For if a man may keep to a certain goodness, a certain worship, throughout his life; he will be ready when Allah opens the door of mercy for that particular worship.'

"*Every day, at the beginning, we must intend: 'O, my Lord! I intend to stand up for five hundred acts of worships, as best I can! This I intend, O, my Lord!'* If we make an intention, then all our actions will be according to our intent. It is written that: 'That person who intends to do every act of worship as sincerely as he can, that person will take that mercy from all five hundred acts of worship!'"

A brother wanted to know: "Why not make the intention at the beginning of each month?"

Maulana Nazim answered, "Because, if you put such a heavy load, a whole month, on your nafs, it will never accept it. But, if you make the intention each morning, until that night, he will do it with pleasure. Remember, we intend to worship endlessly, eternally, without ceasing. But, in order to catch our nafs; to be able to use it for worship, we use tricks. We are saying, 'I am only loading this load on you until night! Tomorrow; nothing, finished!'"

The Shaykh continued, "It is like a shopkeeper who posts a sign: 'Today cash—Tomorrow credit.' When a man comes to his shop to buy something on credit, the shopkeeper points to the sign, and says, 'Pay me today, and tomorrow I will allow you to buy something on credit.' When the customer returns the next day, and asks for the credit he was promised, the shopkeeper again points to the sign: 'Today cash—Tomorrow credit!' Understand? Like this we trick our nafs."

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These are the words of our Grandshaykh. Awliya are addressing both our spirits and our bodies, at the same time. Their words may be written on our hearts, and in books. If a man hasn't the power to address your heart, you will not be able to take enough benefit from his words. When words are written on your heart, anytime you may need them you will remember. But if they are not written on your heart, you cannot remember. You cannot benefit from them.

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"There is an unchanging method in Islam," says our Grandshaykh. "Whoever tries hard, and carries difficulties in the way of Allah Almighty and His Prophet (peace be upon him), must be given his reward. While he is carrying his heavy load of worship and does not leave his practice, there may come, at any time, a private mercy for that servant; taking him from here and putting him in his station in the Divine Presence.

"A man once intended to go to Hijaz. He loaded his supplies on his back, and set out on foot. He walked as far as he could until his strength was used up and he could go no further. And yet his intent remained alive. Do you think your Lord would leave his servant in the desert like that? That man remained patient, though with no hope for himself and no power to help himself. At that time, Allah looked out for him; a private mercy opened for that servant. A camel appeared coming along that way. His Lord sent that servant to Hijaz.

"This is our example. If a man carries difficulties for the sake of Allah, his Lord does not leave him. His Lord will pick up those difficulties and give that servant absolute rest and happiness. If a man asks for mercy without carrying difficulties, he is a man seeking wheat in the fall without planting or plowing in the spring. We must carry difficulties for our Lord, and then He will give us everything: endless enjoyment and happiness, eternally."

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From the teachings of our Grandshaykh: "If a person makes a sunnah, it means that the action belongs to our Prophet (peace be upon him). It is from our Prophet's treasures. It is impossible for it to be stolen by Iblis. It cannot vanish; it is protected among the treasures of Muhammad (peace be upon him). Sins and bad actions erase our good actions and worship. When, on the Judgment Day, a servant is in need of good actions, the Prophet (peace be upon him) will give to him from among his treasures which he has kept for that servant.

"It is required that we must worship Allah without asking reward in this life or the next. This action by a servant is kept among Allah Almighty's treasures. Why do so many hadiths mention a reward for the servant who does this or that sunnah? This is because our Prophet (peace be upon him) was ordered to address men according to their various levels and capacities for understanding. In general, most people's nafs wouldn't do

anything without the promise of a reward, like children who must be promised sweets in order to do their chores promptly. So, as some men are interested in women, gardens, and palaces Allah Almighty has promised them these things as a reward for good actions.

"Some, however, are not interested in palaces. They are interested in the King! It is required for us, therefore, to be our Lord's sincere servants; without asking any reward. This is the highest degree of worshipping. Nafs' demands are too limited. If a man can save himself from his ego, he will not be satisfied with the few drops that his nafs crave. All beauties of Paradise are but a few drops from the endless beauty oceans of Allah Almighty! If a man is dying of thirst, will a few drops of water be sufficient for him? Therefore, we are asking only to enter into the Divine Presence, to disappear forever into His endless beauty oceans, endless power oceans, endless mercy oceans. Never returning—finished!"

A murid asked, "Isn't this, also, our egos asking for rewards?"

"No," Maulana told him. "This desire is not of the nafs. Nafs are satisfied with the beauties of Paradise. They cannot understand more than that level. Don't say that your nafs demands the oceans of Allah's beauty! In those oceans there are no ladies, no gardens, no palaces. What is there for your nafs? Nothing! If you say that your nafs wants those endless oceans, you are a liar!"

Maulana continued, "There is a hadith saying that there is a Paradise where there is no garden, no palaces; only Allah's face smiling on the inhabitants. He who asks not for Paradise but only to look on Allah's Divine Face, will be always in that endless beauty, in the Divine Presence. He who looks upon the face of his Lord will forget all else. Clear?"

"Maulana," asked a disciple, "how can we come to this level?"

The Shaykh answered, "We may follow the example of Abu Yazid al-Bistami (may Allah grant him more honors), who said, 'O, my Lord! How can I approach you?' His Lord replied, 'Leave your nafs and come! That is the way!'

"Therefore," Maulana went on, "if a man performs a worship expecting rewards, he may get that reward. But if he performs a worship only for the sake of Allah's love, Allah will give him countless rewards. This my Grandshaykh told me: 'On the Judgment Day he who worshipped for reward will be

sent to Paradise. He who worshipped for the Love of Allah will be taken to the Divine Presence.' Which do you prefer?"

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Our Grandshaykh tells us about our Prophet (peace be upon him): "Our Prophet (peace be upon him) has about two hundred fifty names. The most lovely is Abdullah because it shows that he was a servant of his Lord, and the highest honor for a man is to be the obedient slave of his Lord.

"When a man would call to the Prophet, 'O, Abdullah!' the Prophet (peace be upon him) replied, three times, 'La bayk! La bayk! La bayk!' It means, 'I obey, O, my Lord! I am at your service!' This attribute of our Prophet (peace be upon him) is the sign of his most excellent humbleness, and thus he guides his nation to humbleness, also.

"He who knows that he is a slave of his Lord cannot be proud. He will be humble, and humbleness is a most effective medicine for his bad character. Among all creatures, our Prophet (peace be upon him) has reached the highest point in humbleness, and Allah says on the tongue of Muhammad (peace be upon him), 'If a servant will be humble, then, as much as he is humble will Allah raise that servant's degree.' Therefore, the more humble we are, the nearer we are to the Divine Presence. And conversely, as much as we are proud, that much are we farther from our goal. The most proud creature is Iblis, and therefore he is farthest from the Divine Presence.

"One of the great Awliya was Rif'ai (may Allah be pleased with him). He said, 'I tried all doors going to the Divine Presence, and I found all of them full-up. I then tried the door of humbleness, and I found it empty. I entered the Divine Presence through that door!'

"All prophets and Awliya have come to teach people humbleness because our nafs, our ego, is proud. If a man does not educate his nafs according to the directions of Prophets and Awliya, he will be more and more proud—proud of his business, proud of his money, proud of his rank. He will ask, by any means, to be proud.

"Everything we have is from our Lord. All is from His favor. Therefore, we must try our nafs in every situation so that we may be more humble. Everything we are proud of in ourselves is from and belongs to our Lord, Allah Almighty. Yet, so many people think that some quality they possess, such as fame, or knowledge, or beauty, or even old age, belongs to

them, and they are asking others to respect them for it. This is wrong. This is our nafs' pride. All favors are from our Lord. He gives and withholds as He likes. How can we claim the respect that is due only to Him? We cannot ask others to respect us. Leave it for Allah to make others respect you. Real respect is to respect all others. They are your Lord's servants, just as you are. Only when you give this respect to others will you properly respect yourself. Only then may others respect you.

"The Sultan ul Arifin, the King of the Knowers, is Abu Yazid al-Bistami (may Allah Almighty give him more glory and honor). He said, 'I took it as an obligation to respect all people and all creatures. I didn't wait for anyone to respect me. This was my way throughout my life.' As a consequence, Abu Yazid (may Allah Almighty grant him more glory and honor) has been respected by Muslims for one-thousand years. When we hear his name we may say, 'Qadus Allahu Sirrahu-l ali,' may Allah Almighty grant him more glory and honor."

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Our Grandshaykh says, about the hadith, 'Qulu wal-himma' til wal Iman' (strength of himmah is from strength of faith): "We have physical bodies, and we have spiritual bodies. There is a pleasure belonging to each. But only the spiritual is permanent, and, therefore, it is up to us to be patient; to forego the pleasures of this life in order that we may reach our permanent pleasures in the Divine Presence.

"This life is a test for us. We must choose to work toward 'akhira,' the life hereafter, rather than the temporary, physical pleasures of this life. The power necessary to sustain our working toward the permanent, the spiritual, the power by which the Saints can move mountains, is called 'himmah.' Our Prophet (peace be upon him) says that himmah comes from the power of our belief, our Iman. As much as you have faith, you will have himmah. This is the meaning of the hadith.

"In the light of this, we may see that the pursuit of physical pleasures will weaken both Iman (faith) and himmah (power). Thus, a person given over to his wordly appetites will not only deny, but actually lose sight of the existence of a higher life. He will become increasingly powerless (that is, without sufficient himmah to extricate himself from his position. It is a vicious circle; no Iman (belief), no power (himmah)—no himmah, no belief, and as a consequence no akhira, no permanent, spiritual pleasure for that servant. So, we must be careful. We must be

patient and forego our desires for this world (dunya). This patience builds Iman, which gives us the power (himmah) to reach our spiritual goal: Akhira.

"There must be a balance in our activities each day, according to Shariah. Eight hours must be devoted to providing for one's needs in this world. Eight hours must also be given to providing for the next life. Lastly, eight hours must be for resting. If a man has enough himma, he may take from the time set aside for this world's workings, and give it over to doings for the eternal life.

"This working for the eternal life is not just prayers and worshipping. It is anything that you do for the sake of Allah Almighty, to make Him pleased with you. Reading Quran, hadith, religious books; doing dhikr, helping people—all good-nesses. Also, sitting and listening to Allah's words in a meeting, writing, sitting with your wife for Allah's sake, teaching, learning, everyone knows his actions. Everyone knows whether an action is for Allah's sake, or for his ego's sake.

"If you are asking for your nafs' pleasure, that pleasure will be only for a few moments. Then, a thick cloud of sorrow will cover your heart. But, if you are doing for your Lord, He will send pleasure oceans to you. There will be unlimited pleasure for you. He says, 'O, son of Adam! You must keep your Lord's pleasure!'"

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Our Grandshaykh was saying, "Whenever a man is wrong in himself, all things appear wrong to him. When he is all right within himself, the world appears all right to him. The world is created completely. Everything is created perfectly by our Creator."

When he heard those words of our Grandshaykh, a disciple asked Shaykh Nazim, "How can this be? Our nafs are imperfect. We are working to perfect ourselves, are we not?"

Shaykh Nazim answered him this way: "Jalaluddin Rumi (may Allah be pleased with him) told the story of the carpenter's apprentice who was very clumsy, though no one could figure out why. One day, his master hit upon an idea: He pointed to a shelf in his workshop and told the apprentice, 'O, my son! Bring me the bottle that you see on that shelf over there.'

"'But, there are two bottles, master,' the boy protested. 'Which one shall I bring?'"

"The master handed the boy a hammer and told him, 'Here, take this hammer and break one of them. Then, bring the other one to me.'

"'As you like, O, my master,' replied the apprentice, and he took the hammer in his hand. When he struck one of the bottles, however, he was amazed to find that both of the bottles shattered into pieces! The boy had double vision.

"Our nafs are like this," explained Shaykh Nazim. "He who is yet the slave of his ego sees things incorrectly. That which he imagines to be imperfect or wrong is, in reality, complete and perfect. Where we may see two there is only one. Thus Jalaluddin Rumi (may Allah be pleased with him) was warning people to search themselves when they see something that appears wrong to them. We must ask ourselves, 'What is wrong in me that I see this wrong thing?' This is the highest degree of faith, and the highest degree of believing in the goodness of the Creator. When you see something wrong you must say, 'O, my nafs! You are wrong!'"

"The Creator is not creating wrong things or imperfect things. At the top, at the essence, if we could but see it: perfection! When you hear the braying of a donkey don't be disturbed, that donkey is showing us his perfection. Without his braying, that donkey is not perfect! Some people are asking me, 'O, Shaykh! Pray for my little son to be silent!' I tell them, His perfection is in those actions about which you are complaining. He is not a big man, to sit quietly! If I pray for him to be silent, you will then come back to me and say, 'O, Shaykh! Our baby is too quiet. You must do something!'"

"Here is another story: Once, a great caliph was sitting in his palace. His rest was soon interrupted by the intrusion of a fly. No matter how hard he tried, he could not catch that fly, nor could he make it leave him alone.

"His anger and frustration mounting, he summoned his advisor. 'O, Shaykh!' he cried, 'for what purpose has this fly been created?'"

"The sage answered him, 'Allah Almighty has made this tiny creature for one purpose. It is to render great kings powerless! They are vanquished by this little fly!'"

"There is yet a third story about this point," Shaykh Nazim continued. "One of the Ottoman emperors went to Constantinople to visit a certain Grandshaykh. With great care and good manners, he entered the Grandshaykh's room and sat before him. As he sat, he was set upon by many flies, causing him great discomfort. Seeing the emperor's predicament, the Grand-

shaykh said to him, 'O, my king! Why do you not order these flies to leave?'

"The emperor replied, 'O, my Shaykh! They are not listening to my command!'

"How are you a king?" returned the master, 'if your subjects will not obey you?' Then, turning to the flies, the Shaykh commanded, 'Out!' The flies quickly left through a small hole in the wall.

"O, my shaykh!" lamented the emperor. 'You are the real king!'

"This is the meaning of 'Manna t'Allah ata'ahu qul'y shay.' If a man will obey Allah exactly all things will obey him. When you see all things as correct, you will have reached perfection. You cannot expect hens to crow like roosters, or lions to be like cows.

"Once, King Solomon (peace be upon him) was sitting upon his magnificent flying throne. As he passed over his army standing in review, he felt, in his heart, a surge of pride. At once the throne descended. Angrily, Solomon (peace be upon him) took his staff and began to beat the throne. 'Be correct!' he ordered.

"Not until you are correct," replied the throne. Solomon (peace be upon him) immediately understood and threw himself into sajdah, saying, 'O, my Lord! Pardon me!'

"It is, therefore, impossible for our actions to be correct; for our families, our neighbors, and others to be correct with us until we are correct with our Lord. Subhan'Allah!

"As a final note on this point," continued Shaykh Nazim, "we may take a lesson from Imam Ghazzali (may Allah be pleased with him), who said: 'It is impossible to find a better situation than that which exists today, for those who are ready. You cannot yearn for things to be as they used to be, nor for the way that they might be. The conditions that we are in now are perfect, most suitable for us. Allah Almighty is giving His mercy as much as we need; as much as we are able to carry.'"

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Our Grandshaykh was saying, "What is the spirit of faith? What is the base upon which faith is built (Ruh ul Iman)? The spirit of faith, without which man cannot live, without which faith cannot live, is to *carry everything that you do not like, and be patient with those you don't like.*

"In this life, we are carrying responsibility and we are all living together. As many as there are people on this earth,

such is the number of different characters and abilities, and you must carry them all in your home, your neighborhood, and in your community. This is the base of faith. You must carry them. You can't say, 'I can't carry them!' However, whenever you are carrying, you get more power for your faith. It is like the foundations of a building which are the strongest part and carry all of the other parts. So too when you are carrying everything that gives your nafs no satisfaction, then your faith will increase and become stronger. Allah is carrying all. Prophets are carrying all. Are you better than Allah? Better than prophets?"

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If a man is doing an action that is not pleasing to Allah, His Prophet (peace be upon him) or Awliya, it means that he is considered a 'secret kafir,' a secret unbeliever. Therefore, we must be careful, even more careful than we are about our openly visible acts, not to be a secret unbeliever. It is a terrible thing—very dangerous.

Our evident and public acts may be easily corrected, but our secret acts are another matter! We have, therefore, been ordered to clean ourselves of both evident and secret kafir. Our Grandshaykh is advising us that everyone must keep a balance with him with which to weigh his actions. We must look at each action that we do, or are about to do, and make sure that it will be pleasing to Allah, His Prophet (peace be upon him), or Awliya. When you *know* that that action will bring pleasure to your Lord, to our Prophet (peace be upon him), and to Awliya, you may do it. If not, you must leave it! This is a measure for acting in religion.

"Secondly," our Grandshaykh says, "if a man balances his actions in this life, there will be no balancing for him on the Judgment Day. On that day, there will be only a 'check-up' for him, because Allah doesn't balance a man's actions twice. Therefore, our Prophet (peace be upon him) says, 'It is more lovely for Allah that a man sits for an hour thinking and weighing his actions, than if he prays for seventy years!' This is because you may erase your seventy years of worship with an act that Allah is not pleased with, but if you weigh that action first, with your mind, you may be able to leave it, and escape its harm."

So, it is important for a believer to weigh his actions. If it is good, you must do it. If it is no good, leave it. He who knows

an action is unlovely to his Lord and does it anyway, he is a secret kafir!

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Now we are coming to an important point. Our Grandshaykh asks, "What is the spirit of all acts of worship? If you cannot keep that spirit, all your worshipping will be for nothing.

"There are three points: The first is to keep your tongue from all prohibited speaking—speak only good words, not bad. Nothing else. Our Prophet (peace be upon him) said, 'To keep one's tongue, that is the way of safety for men.'

"The second is to keep your eyes from looking at prohibited things and places. Don't look at dirty places and actions. Our Prophet (peace be upon him) said, 'Your eyes are making zina (fornication).' To keep your eyes from haram is very difficult, but you must keep it. Keeping this gives you more power.

"Third, you must keep all your organs from prohibited actions; listening, going, catching, thinking bad things. You must not sit down and think with bad intentions."

Someone asked, "This is very hard for me. Sometimes, bad thoughts just run through my head."

Shaykh Nazim answered, "If it is without your will there is no responsibility, though we have been ordered to fight those bad thoughts. But don't sit and think bad thoughts with your will, with bad intentions. This is prohibited.

"These three points, that our Grandshaykh has taught us, keep and sustain our good actions. Without keeping our eyes, our tongues, and our organs from prohibited things, we cannot take any benefit from our good actions. It is as if a man planted a tree, tended it carefully for years and then, just as it was about to bear fruit, took an axe and chopped it down! All his efforts have vanished, gone for nothing! When you are planting, you must keep it and protect it from harm by keeping these three points.

"If a man doesn't know what he is doing he cannot take any benefit. We must know what we are doing. Are we building or destroying? Every prohibited action is destroying our building. It is, therefore, more important for a believer to keep himself far from prohibited actions than it is for him to do good things.

"Our Grandshaykh said, for example, that if a man speaks against another person, seven years' worth of his good actions

will be carried from him to the one he speaks against. A moment of backbiting, therefore, will destroy seven years' worth of good actions. So, you see how important it is to keep from prohibited things.

"Also among those prohibited things is envy. It is like a burning fire. Everything you throw on a burning fire will burn. Thus will envy destroy all your good actions.

"Keep far away from prohibited things. They are destroying both your physical and your spiritual bodies. Kafir is the most terrible of prohibited things, and if we are not keeping our tongues, for instance, we may speak a word denying Allah and His Prophet (peace be upon him); thus all our goodness will be destroyed. Keep to your Lord's boundaries. This is a description of a true servant of Allah."

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Our Grandshaykh said an important thing for everyone: "To be able to put one's organs under one's will is the mark of a real servant of Allah. If a man can't do this, he is the servant of his nafs.

"Are your organs listening to you? You must be able to advise yourself, before you may advise others. First, you must put your body under your control. If you do this, you may put others under your command; your family, your children, your ikhwan, etc . . .

"Therefore, you must not complain that your children, your family, and your friends are not listening to you. You must turn to yourself. If your self accepts to be under your command, then other people may accept to be under your command. This is the way of all prophets and awliya; first they are fighting themselves, then they are coming to other people. It is impossible for a prophet or a wali to be the slave of his nafs.

"When these men speak, their words have an effect upon those who listen. Yet, there are people who, when they hear those prophets and awliya speaking, are putting their fingers in their ears trying to escape those words. They know that speaking will have an effect!

"Allah says, 'O, My Prophet! How can you make a person hear your invitation? He is deaf, and he is turning his face and escaping. If he is only deaf, and he is sitting and looking at you, he may understand something; but he is deaf *and* he is turning

and running away from you! It is impossible to make him listen!"

"Yet, if a person will listen, it is impossible for that person not to take a benefit from the words of a prophet or a wali, or from any association with them. From their speech, a man may take a power to control his nafs and go on the right way."

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Our Grandshaykh said about Luqman (who spoke with Divine Wisdom): "What is the reason that he was given Divine Wisdom? It is because he left the pleasures of his nafs. It is the most difficult thing for a man to be against his nafs' pleasure and to be against devils.

"This is 'Jihad al-Akbar': the greatest war, against the greatest enemy. It is the most difficult position for a believer. This is because if he gives in to his nafs' pleasures, his belief vanishes! It is impossible to be a real believer if you are doing as your nafs asks. This is a balance by which we can judge ourselves. Are we real believers or not? We must be careful. We must weigh every action. Does it give pleasure to our Lord, or to our nafs? Which are we serving? If an action is for your nafs' pleasure, don't do it! Your nafs will guide you to Hell, and to no other place!

"Luqman left all haram. Then, he left as well the permitted pleasures, for Allah has promised His servants that if they leave all pleasures of their nafs, He will give them the greatest pleasure from Himself, so that a servant will not miss those pleasures that he left.

"Now, all this is training for the greatest war. We are sitting, training. Then will come an order for the greatest war; and you will leave all things, like a dead person, and enter into a little hole for fighting. There, for forty days, you will sit down with your greatest enemy, fighting. This will come!"

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Our Grandshaykh was saying, "What is real obedience to Allah in worship? What do the Awliya say about real worship of Allah Almighty?

"It is to stand in the Divine Presence and say, 'O, my Lord! I am standing in Your Divine Presence without anything. I am coming with empty hands to Your Divine Presence; I brought nothing with me.'

"In front of Allah, His servant has nothing. All of our

prayers and worship are His favors to us. He is giving, not us. So that if a servant comes to his Lord's Presence and says, 'O, my Lord I brought to you so many prayers, so many fasts, so much dhikr, so much goodness'; Allah says, 'O, My servant! From whom are you bringing those things?'

"A real servant to his Lord knows that all the goodness that he has is a mercy from his Lord, guiding him to his Lord's way. He knows that but for his Lord's mercy, he wouldn't be a praying servant, fasting servant, making-dhikr servant, and so forth. So, when he comes to his Lord's presence, he says, 'My hands are empty, O, my Lord. I am in need of Your mercy, always. Give me more mercy, O, my Lord!'

"Whoever tries to go to the Divine Presence with his ego—he is thrown out—unaccepted, turned away at the door! Rejected! Therefore, our Grandshaykh is teaching us how the spirit of a real worshipper must be: Suppose you knew a very good, very generous man. Many times, he has helped you, given to you, been a good friend to you. If such a man was in need of something from you, say some work to be done, what will you say when he asks you? How much money will you ask from him? What do you say? You will say, 'It is my pleasure to serve you. No payment.' So, how can we ask our Lord, 'Pay me, and I will pray for you. Pay me, and I will do your pleasure'? No! What kind of manners are these?

"A real servant asks his Lord only, 'O, my Lord! What is Your pleasure?' Nothing else. If your Lord is pleased with you, it is all things for you. We are nothing; He is all things. We ask only for His mercy, His pleasure. Also, it is our duty to ask from our Lord mercy for everyone.

"After the death of Abu Yazid (may Allah give him more glory and honor), some people saw him in a dream. 'How is it for you in that world?' they asked him.

"When I got to the Divine Presence," answered Abu Yazid, "they asked me, 'What have you brought us?' I replied, 'O, my Lord! O, my Sultan! As we know in our worldly life, when a poor man comes to the palace of the king, he is not going to be asked what he is bringing, but he is asked, 'What do you want?'" I am coming, O, my Majesty Sultan, to You, and I am expecting You to ask me what I want! What can I bring to You? You have all things, endless treasures. I have nothing. I am asking from Your mercy, O, my Lord! Give to me!"—This is from the Sultan ul Arifin, the King of the Knowers!"

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Allah Almighty accepts our prayers. Everything we ask of Him, He is going to accept; maybe He gives it quickly, or maybe He delays it until our life's end, until the grave or until the Judgment. But, He will give to every person who asks from Him. He is 'Al-Mujib,' the acceptor, the answerer.

My Grandshaykh said to me: "O, my son! I will teach you a short, but powerful prayer. Say, 'O, my Lord! I am asking you to accept all the prayers I have made to You until the end of my life; also all the prayers at which I was present, or that I hear before I go from this life. O, my Lord! Show me the results of these prayers. May my prayers be acceptable from now up until my life's end and give me from Your secret mercy treasures, from Your secret favors, more 'hidaya,' and make me more respectable here and hereafter."

"Thirdly, give me power, from Your power oceans. From Your endless power oceans give me power so that I can help all Your servants and guide them to Your mercy oceans and favors, so that I may be as Your Prophet (peace be upon him) says, "The leader of a nation is the servant of his nation.""

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Our Grandshaykh was saying, about all Awliya. "Some Awliya are too ashamed to ask anything from their Lord, because they see that they are in endless need of their Lord. They say, 'O, my Lord! You know best what I need from your mercy. My needs are endless. Fulfill my needs, O, my Lord, as you know.'

"If any man reaches to absolute cleanliness in his heart, so that no more bad characters will be with him; if a man has a pure heart, and he has reached the Divine Presence, and he has authority to always be in the Divine Presence; if he has pleasure with being in the Divine Presence; if that person is veiled, for even one moment from the Divine Presence, his heart will explode! Literally! So great will his sorrow be! Those people are making dhikr silently, duas secretly. This is the highest degree for people. Pure heart.

"For people still approaching this level, it may be better to make dhikr loudly, duas loudly. Even dancing, for the sake of Allah, may be acceptable!"

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Our Grandshaykh teaches us about those situations in our lives that we can meet with joking and laughter. Many people

like joking, but it is not true of everybody. Not every person carries joking with them. (You can't make jokes with everybody, because some people can't take it.) To whom may you make jokes? To one who, if you break his hand, is not angry with you. He is not changing his situation with regard to you, not changing his love for you. With such a person you may joke, not with everyone. Joking is a good way to keep peoples' hearts good with you.

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Our Grandshaykh was saying that Sayyidina Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) was always praying withr at the end of the night, but Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) was praying before sleeping. Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) said, "I am praying withr before sleeping because if I am going to die before I awaken, I don't want to be in my Lord's Presence without withr. Therefore, I am hurrying to pray withr before sleeping."

But Sayiddina Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) delayed withr until the end of the night, and he said, "As our Prophet (peace be upon him) said, 'Actions are rewarded according to intentions.' Therefore, I intend to pray withr at the end of the night. If I die before praying withr, but I intend to pray, it is all right."

"An important point," says our Grandshaykh, "is that, in the sight of our Prophet (peace be upon him), Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him), and all Grandshaykhs in Naqsh-bandiyya; their opinion is not to delay any worship out of its time.

"Everything must be in its time. You cannot put it out of its time, because every time is occupied—full-up. You cannot find empty time. Therefore, it is a foolishness to say, 'I shall do this tomorrow.' It is craziness and stupidity because tomorrow is not empty. It is occupied, full-up with actions that you have responsibilities for fulfilling. If you cannot carry today's load, how can you carry tomorrow's load also—two loads!

"Therefore, in our tariqat there is no delaying actions. Actions must be done in their times. As Allah Almighty says, 'For praying there is a special time and order.' This is a sign for us that for each action, there is a special time, and we must do it in that time without delay. Thus, to delay an action is an unacceptable thing before our Prophet (peace be upon him),

Abu Bakr as-Siddiq (may Allah be pleased with him), and all Naqshbandi Grandshaykhs!

"Asking to delay our actions comes from our nafs. Our nafs is very lazy. It does not like to move. Therefore, it wishes to delay all things. To our nafs, it seems easy to say, 'I shall do it tomorrow.' It is always escaping from serious actions. The nafs only likes to play.

"There is an important hadith on this subject. It applies to all people, not just Muslims. 'Halakal mu safafu': 'Procrastinators are self-destroyed!' This hadith signifies that Muhammad (peace be upon him) was sent for all nations. It is a high wisdom. He who delays his actions is destroyed, because today's working is better than tomorrow's working. It is golden! If you can do the whole work tomorrow, it is only silver! Today's action is a virgin, tomorrow's will be a widow!"

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Now we are speaking on the beauties and endless pleasures and endless favors of Allah Almighty, the endless taste of Paradise such as I heard from my Grandshaykh and such as you have never yet heard!

In Paradise, there are so many favors of Allah Almighty that it is impossible to describe. Only some of them can you understand. My Grandshaykh said to me: "If a man eats from Paradise, one small morsel, how shall I describe how it will be! An olive, for example—in this life, it is very bitter. But, in Paradise . . . You will take more good taste from one olive there than you can find from all the good tastes from forty days' meals in this life!

"How will it be? O, my brother! We are in prison, and we don't know! There is no taste in this life, yet we are running after it. In this life the first piece of food is the best, the second not as good, and the last one is tasteless. But in Paradise the more the eating the more the taste! With each, the taste increases successively."

"And," our Grandshaykh was saying, "if a man looks upon one of the ladies of Paradise (houris), he will be useless with the most beautiful girl in this world. So radiant are their beauties!

"But, if a woman is a believer in this world, her beauty in the next world will be greater than that of those girls in Paradise. Women believers will be queens in Paradise; the houris

will be their servants! Theirs will be endless pleasures and beauties.

"Allah Almighty will ask each servant on the Judgment Day, 'O, My servant! What about My favors to you? How did you use them, for good or for bad?' This is the most difficult situation for believers, indeed, for all people. We must be ready to reply quickly, so that we may move on to Paradise. If you used His favors for His pleasure, it is a pleasure for you, also, that day—no difficulties."

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Our Grandshaykh was saying that egoism is the worst character in people. It is born with people, and grows with them. You may see it in everyone. They attribute all things to their ego—their mind, their success, all things and, in so doing, they are losing their Creator and their Creator's favors for them as well. Every person's ego thinks himself to be his majesty, the king, and this is the reason for all the troubles in this world.

All prophets have come to fight this false idea. Even a believer may fall prey to his egotism. Everytime he thinks that his good deeds or his prayers are the result of his own doing, he fails to observe that those actions are his Lord's favors to him. He is thus at fault, having left good manners.

It is good manners to observe all goodness as being from our Lord's favor to us, and all badness as being from our ego. He who says, 'I am such and such' (a worshipper, a commander, a learned man, etc.), is claiming Divinity. It is only for Allah to say, 'I am.' When He says, 'I am your Lord!' it is true. It is not for His servants to say, 'I am.' This is what Iblis said, and it was the first egoism. 'I am better,' he said, and whoever says this about himself is on the same level with Iblis!

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Our Grandshaykh explains 'tawbah' (repentance): "What is tawbah? It is not listening to your four enemies—nafs, hawa (desires), dunya, and Satan. To repent is not to listen to ego and its desires, or devils, or the temporary pleasures of this life. This is the reality, the real meaning of repentance. Man may agree with his Lord or with his four common enemies. If you are in agreement with your enemies, you haven't faith

nor mind. If you are in disagreement with your Lord, you must be an unbeliever!

Thus, real tawbah, real repentance, is to be in disagreement with your enemies. Don't listen to their orders! If a man is asking to return to his Lord, he must leave; he must be in rebellion against those four enemies.

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Our Grandshaykh said, about women: "Once, in a dream, I saw our Prophet (peace be upon him), who said to me, 'A woman must keep respect for her husband so much that if she is sitting in a meeting with Khidr (peace be upon him), all prophets, and all saints, she must keep her husband's respect above all of them!'

"If she is not going to respect her husband as much as that, she cannot take any good results from her serving and worship. The most important thing for wives is to keep their husbands' respect."

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Our Grandshaykh was saying that what Allah Almighty asks of His servants is that they worship with 'Ikhlas' (sincerity, purity). Allah Almighty asks only pure worshipping, and pure worshipping means to have a pure heart.

What is a pure heart? It is a heart that has nothing but his Lord in it—only Allah Almighty. This is a pure heart. If there is something except his Lord in one's heart, he hasn't a pure heart.

Allah Almighty isn't asking just salat (prayer) or fasting (saum). Those acts of worship are not targets in themselves. They are not original, they are only means for reaching pure hearts. They are the means to an end. This is important.

Therefore, our Grandshaykh says, "Don't give yourself such a big load for learning or worshipping. The important thing is to have a pure heart. Each one of us knows which side of himself is not true, or which character from himself is not good. Each of us knows what is his deficiency. Everyone knows and he must complete that point, he must clean that character from his heart, so that he may strive to have a pure heart. This is 'mujahida,' struggle! Struggle must be for everyone; to fight with his bad characters and change them into good

ones. We must defeat our bad characters in order to have a pure heart.

Everything that occupies your heart and keeps you from your Lord is making your heart impure. You must try to keep everything away from your heart but Allah. There is no room in your heart for romantic love! We say that the heart is for Allah alone. For children, we say our love for them is in the liver! For our wives, . . . !

You are asking why men and women have such love for each other, why they may love the opposite sex to the point of idol worship? It is because they don't know where to put their love! Man is created for the love of Allah Almighty. Allah Almighty loved Muhammad (peace be upon him), and created all the sons of Adam (peace be upon him) for His love. Therefore, love is original. Each one of us has love, but most people have forgotten what its object is. When they put their love in women, in children, or in anything except Allah, it means that love will be lost. If you put your love with your wife, she will die and your love will be wasted (souda). For children—the same. Any time you put your love in this dunya, it will be wasted! But, if you are putting your love with Allah Almighty it is never going to be wasted—not here, not hereafter. It is not going to be wasted. If you are putting your love with your Prophet (peace be upon him), or with your Shaykh, or with your fellow mu'mins, you may find that love here, and hereafter.

Love is the most precious thing for everyone. It is the most precious, most valuable, and most expensive thing that the sons of Adam (peace be upon him) have been given. How can you put the most precious thing in dogs and cats? For what? Are you putting a diamond on the neck of a pig? No, you are putting it on the neck of a beautiful lady! You must think about what western people are doing now. Their minds are not working—no taste with their doings!

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Our Grandshaykh was saying that our egos have eighty-thousand bad characters. That means that there are eighty-thousand veils between us and our Prophet (peace be upon him)! If you can't break all those veils, if you can't cut them, then you cannot see your Prophet (peace be upon him) unless you are dreaming.

Some people can see the Prophet (peace be upon him) in their dreams, but the Prophet (peace be upon him) may be seen

when you are awake also. Who can see the Prophet (peace be upon him) without sleeping? Those people who cut out all those veils from their hearts may see our Prophet (peace be upon him).

And the worst one of those veils, the worst of those bad characters—what is it? “Egoism!” says our Grandshaykh. From egoism come thousands of bad characters! And, out of all those thousands of bad characters coming from egoism, what is the worst one? “It is anger!” says our Grandshaykh again.

‘Ghadab’ (anger) is the worst, because he who is angry is not listening or accepting anything from Allah or prophets. This is because an angry person has lost his mind; he is acting without mind, like a car without a driver! Anger is the opposite of mind; you cannot do anything with your mind when you are angry. All things will be bad and become worse and worse, with anger. He who is angry may damage everything with that anger.

Therefore, it is the most important duty for all believers, perhaps for all people, to fight their anger; not to be angry. This is a very important point for every person. Our Grandshaykh says we must fight firmly against anger; not to let it be judge of us, or dominate us. “If anyone is angry,” he says, “and he is making dhikr, saying, ‘Allah! Allah! Allah!’ the angels are answering him, ‘O, liar! O, liar! O, liar!’ If you are angry, you cannot say, ‘Allah!’; you must say, instead, ‘Astaghfirullah! I am asking forgiveness, O, my Lord! I am asking pardon, O, my Lord!’ This means you are accepting your mistake, admitting your wrongness. Then Allah Almighty will save His servant from that mistake. He is not going to leave that servant with that bad character.”

It is enough for a person, a very great success, to be able to leave his anger. Our Prophet says, “Al hilmi sayyid ul-ahlaq.” It means, “Not to be angry—it is the king of all good characters!” Clear? Not to be angry is the king of all good characters. To be ‘hilm’; to be restrained, soft, not coming quickly to anger; this is the best character in a man. To be white in his heart; to be able to carry all things without anger is the first order for every believer, and especially for every person who says, “I am on the way of the Sufis, I am on the way of Tariqat.” They must keep themselves far from anger.

Whoever can judge his anger, it means that he has power to judge his ego. When you can judge to keep yourself far away from anger, it means that you can control your nafs. Otherwise, it is impossible. You must know that all actions, all events, are not going to happen as we like. Nothing happens,

no one can be as we like; it is impossible. When you know this you may keep yourself far away from anger, because anger is the result of thinking that you can do everything as you like. No one can do this; so for what will you be angry?

Our Grandshaykh says, “You must be patient in your house. You must try not to be angry in your house; with your wife, with your children, with your business, with little boys, with big men; you must keep quiet with yourself, with everyone. You must keep soft, softness. You must deal with all people with softness and gentleness. Gentleness—it is the king of all good characters. So says Allah Almighty.”

Try this and see if it is correct or not: “Nothing like gentleness,” says our Prophet (peace be upon him), and therefore he has ordered Muslims to be gentle with all; not harming anyone. Now, however, we are very far from our Prophet’s advice, from his directions, guiding us to that point. If we were keeping that advice, being gentle with all, not being angry, the whole world would have come to Islam. But we are so far from that point—as far as the skies are from earth!

“You must not even be angry with animals,” says our Grandshaykh. “He who is angry with animals leaves his human nature, and descends to the level of animal nature.” So many people are angry with animals, and Islam does not accept anger, even for animals. You must have mercy for animals because they have no minds. Why are you angry with them?

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Our Grandshaykh told me that, on the Judgment Day, cats will come bringing fire with their tails to burn their owners. But dogs will rush upon them saying, “Are you not ashamed? Why are you bringing fire for your owners? You say that they didn’t give you enough food? They left you to go hungry? For shame! Didn’t they keep you indoors, inside their warm houses while we were left outside in the cold? Weren’t you around them when they were eating? In their houses, on their tables? How can you say that they didn’t feed you? We were kept outside, but they didn’t leave us to go hungry! How can you speak against them this way?”

What is the meaning of this story? Our Prophet (peace be upon him) says, “Ittaki sharrim qassante illayh.” It means, “Here is the evil from the one to whom you have done good!” Therefore, he is saying that we must keep ourselves from those for whom we are doing goodness! Fear from one for whom

you have done good! You must be careful; there are so many people that you may do goodness for, only to have them turn and do badness to you. You may try this; it happens so many times.

What does it mean? Prophet's hadith shows us that we must not forget a goodness that has been done to us. Yes, it is from good characters not to forget those who have done goodness for you—to remember. We have a saying: "If someone gives you one cup of coffee, you must keep remembrance of that goodness for forty years!" We shall make this more clear. Our Grandshaykh says that if some person does a goodness for you, and afterwards you become displeased with that person over something he said or did, your displeasure, your forgetfulness of that person's good deed toward you is from bad character.

When you forget a person's goodness toward you, then you will be like cats. One hundred times you may give it meat; so many things you may give it. But, if you leave it just once, that cat will make objections and complaints to Allah, saying, "He left me hungry!" This is bad character, and if anyone is doing that, it means he has no good character. If a man does goodness for you one hundred times, and then he does one wrong thing to you, you must not become his enemy. You must not forget his goodness to you from before. If you do that, you will have no good characters; you will be like cats.

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Our Grandshaykh says, "There are twelve good characters in dogs that you may also find in prophets and Awliya. They are: *Not forgetting goodness*, they don't forget those who have done goodness to them. They are *not going to be angry* with their owners even if they are beaten and sent away; if their owner calls, they will return with tails wagging; they have *humbleness*; they have *obedience* (kana-a); they are *satisfied with small things*; they are *truthful*; they are *trustworthy*, good friends; they are *loyal*, they will remain with their owners and never turn traitor; they are '*zahid*,' not looking to anything from this dunya. It means that they have nothing from this world, no place for themselves. They may sleep anywhere, and if someone throws stones at them, they quickly get up and go somewhere else; they are very *light sleepers*, they don't sleep too much, and quickly awaken; they are very *patient*; they are always *grateful* for everything that they are given. If a man has

those attributes, he will be a wali. Those twelve attributes belong to prophets and awliya!

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Our Grandshaykh was speaking about the hadiths of our Prophet (peace be upon him). He said that if a man tried to find all the meanings, or tried to come to the end of any hadith, he couldn't do it! This is because every hadith is also a 'wahyun,' a revelation from Allah Almighty, and everything belonging to Allah Almighty is endless.

Our Prophet (peace be upon him) never said one hadith without knowing what its reality was in the Divine Presence. 'Azali Haqiqat,' or self-eternal truth, was known by our Prophet (peace be upon him), and said in his hadiths. Rasul-ullah (peace be upon him) said, "If all the trees were pens, and all the oceans were ink, they would not be sufficient to write all the meanings of hadiths!"

This is great respect for Muhammad (peace be upon him). He has so much knowledge, but that knowledge is only a tiny point, a dot in relation to Allah Almighty's knowledge. The knowledge of Muhammad (peace be upon him) is not even a drop from an endless ocean! If you dip a needle into the ocean, how much will stay on the needle's point? It is like that. The ocean is endless, and our Prophet's knowledge is less than a drop!

And yet, that tiny drop is like an endless ocean itself when compared with all creatures' knowledge! "This," our Grandshaykh says, "is the minimum respect for Allah's knowledge. If anyone does not speak like this, then they have responsibility for that point that they are not giving complete respect to their Lord."

Once upon a time, there was a big alim—an alim that was too big. He was so proud of his knowledge. One day, a dervish came to him, a simple man who said to him, "Please, O, my master! I am coming to ask one question."

The alim said, "Ask as you like."

So, the dervish said to that grand alim, "What about all knowledge in relation to our Prophet's knowledge? Give me an example that I can understand."

The scholar took a big sheet of paper and taking his pencil he put a tiny dot in the middle of the paper. Then he said, "O, my brother, O, my fellow, O, my guy! We are saying that if this

sheet of paper is all of our Prophet's knowledge, then this tiny dot is all other people's knowledge!"

Then that simple dervish said, "Can you find, in that tiny dot, how much knowledge is coming to you? What is your share from that point that you have drawn? What is your knowledge in relation to all creatures?"

When he heard those words that big alim began to shake.

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Our Grandshaykh is asking, "Who is the happiest person in this life? Who is most satisfied? He is that person who is satisfied with that station in life in which his Lord put him. It is the station of contentment—to look at everything and see that it is most suitable for him, and also for all."

Shaykh Nazim told us, "This situation is the most suitable thing for me because my Lord put me in this situation. If it were no good for me, He wouldn't have put me in it. He says who is the most satisfied person, and the happiest person in this life. We must believe that Allah Almighty desires for us goodness—always."

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Our Grandshaykh was describing how real faith should be: "We must believe that all actions, whether from goodness, or from badness, are from Him Almighty. If we truly believe this, we shall reach the real faith.

"It is not enough to merely say this. You must practice, exercise for this purpose until you reach the point where you cannot see anything from goodness or from badness coming to you without His will! This leads us to real faith.

"If a man harms you, and you become his enemy, it means that you are not a believer. It means you do not believe that his action was from your Lord's will, that all things are from Allah. If we believe, we must be patient with each other's actions. Allah is trying our faith, each of us with others. We must see, therefore, that all actions are from our Lord's will."

Our Prophet (peace be upon him) says, "People will deal with you according to your actions." If you are good and someone intends you harm, Allah will defend you. You must not be afraid of people's harm. You must be honorable to all, good to all, respectful, merciful to all, generous, and good-thinking to

all. We must be patient with all people because we believe that no one comes to us without our Lord's will.

Therefore, no enmity in Islam. It is an important point. There is a saying in Islam: "Goodness for goodness, anyone can do. But, goodness for badness, only a few people can do." We have been ordered to do goodness. We have not been ordered to do badness.

And we must know that *nothing happens in this universe without Allah Almighty's will*. If a man objects to Allah's will, then he is fighting Allah Almighty. When he says, "Allah! Allah!" the angels say, "Liar! Liar!" and Quran gives him a curse!

"Don't be teacher to Allah!" says our Grandshaykh. "Allah knows best, and you don't know anything! Don't make any objection for anything; you are servants, you are slaves to Him and He is Governor, Absolute King of the Universe!"

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An important point for everyone: Our Grandshaykh was saying, "If a man is going to do anything, worshipping, or any other actions, it must be voluntarily and gladly. If he is not pleased with that action, he must not do it, for there will be no good result for him from it."

Worshipping, eating, drinking, sleeping, working—all must be done with pleasure. If there is no pleasure in it for you, there will be no pleasure in it for Allah Almighty.

For worshipping, it is important to realize that we are speaking of our souls' pleasure. When we are worshipping, our nafs is not pleased, but our souls are. We must look to our souls' pleasure.

For ordinary working and business, if you have pleasure with a given situation, it will have good results. You may observe this readily among people. Two students, one studying with pleasure, the other forced. What will be the result? It is like this in all occupations; there is so much difference between people. You must do everything you do with pleasure.

Actions may be easy or difficult; what is easy for one may be difficult for another. What is the secret? For the one who finds it easy, it is because it gives him pleasure; while the one who finds it difficult, it is because he is forced to do it.

To be a servant to Allah Almighty is easy or difficult according to different persons. Therefore, Allah says, "You must do your worshipping with pleasure. If you are not pleased, I

am not in need of your worship. I am asking only your pleasure with worshipping. When it is easy for you, do it." Easy actions make people happier; difficult make people unhappy.

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What does Holy Knowledge (Marifat) mean? "Knowledge," says our Grandshaykh, "is a Divine power, given to servants so that with that power they can look at the greatness of Allah Almighty."

In every knowledge, if you look deeply enough, you will see the greatness of the Creator. In Botany, in Chemistry, in Physics, in Astronomy, in every branch of knowledge you will find this to be true. He who looks deeply enough must acknowledge the greatness of the Creator.

Therefore, Grandshaykh says that in knowledge there is a power leading people to the greatness of Allah Almighty. What is the benefit of that knowledge? It is that when a person knows more and more of Allah's greatness, he will see himself as smaller and smaller until he will accept that he is nothing in the sight of the greatness of Allah Almighty.

This is because the worst characteristic of the nafs is to look at himself as the greatest. All egos say, "I am the greatest!" But, when the greatness of Allah Almighty appears to him, he will say, "I am nothing." This is the benefit of real knowledge.

Nowadays, so many persons miss this point. They are learning so many things, but instead of looking through their knowledge to the greatness of Allah Almighty, they are looking to their egos and giving themselves such gigantic personalities! They are mistaken.

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Our knowledge about Allah is going to increase always and it is endless. If it is going to finish, it is not Allah. All things belonging to Allah are endless. As our knowledge of Allah increases, we are going to approach His Divine Presence, and as we are approaching His Divine Presence there will be more pleasure for us. From everything, from every atom in the universe, you may take knowledge about your Lord.

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Our Grandshaykh asks, "What is the first fard (order) from Allah to His servants? The first order, ordered to Adam (peace be upon him), is marriage."

On the marriage night, when two people come together, Allah forgives all their previous sins, so much does He like marriage. (And, as a counterpoint, devils hate marriage.) In our times, marriage is second only to Iman in importance, because marriage keeps a man far away from all prohibited actions.

It is terrible to intend not to marry. For those who intend marriage, and wait for Allah to make it easy for them, it is all right. But, not to intend marriage is bad. All bad character comes as a result of refusing marriage.

Therefore, when Mahdi (peace be upon him) comes, the first order will be for all to marry. He is not leaving anyone to be without marriage.

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Our Grandshaykh said, "What is the description of the period we are now living in? We are living in a time where if a man intends to take one step on the right way, he will find one hundred obstacles in front of him. A very difficult time, one hundred hindrances for every step on the right way! And you must pass all of them to continue on your way."

It was not like this before. But, inasmuch as it is now so difficult, so in these times it is also more valuable, in the sight of Allah, to step on the right way. Therefore, our Prophet (peace be upon him) says, "As much as you encounter difficulties, your reward for good actions will be more and more." Easy work, . . . easy. But, for difficult worship—endless rewards for those who do. Our Prophet (peace be upon him) also said, "In this time for one sunnah, a person is given the reward of one hundred martyrs!"

A brother commented, "So, it's a good idea to always carry a turban!"

"Yes!" said Shaykh Nazim.

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Love is best. This is the way of all prophets and awliya. They love Allah Almighty, and for His sake they love all His creatures. Real love is to love all things belonging to the beloved.

There is a story about Layla and Majnun: He became crazy (majnun) for her love. Everything belonging to Layla was lovely to Majnun, even stones and trees! It must be this way with love for Allah Almighty. Everything belonging to Him must be lovely to one who loves or his love will not be true.

Therefore, every prophet was ready to sacrifice his soul for the servants of his Creator. All awliya are also following that way. They are looking to servants of Allah with mercy. Not one of the Saints bears any hatred for his fellow servants even though they may be sinners. This way will win victory.

Now we are living in a time when enmity and hatred are reaching their highest degree. People are in need of love. Not the sexual kind; this may be found in animals even more than in people. Love is a grant from Allah Almighty. Some keep it in a precious place, and some put it in a dirty place. Some keep that love for Allah Almighty and some for this dirty life. Some people are keeping their honor; they have families, and honorable wives. They are giving their love to their honorable wives. But some people put that precious love in dirty places.

Now all people are in need of love for their Lord alone, and we must ask our Lord to give us love—more love. When love comes, so does mercy. The attribute of souls is love. Souls are living in love-oceans.

The attribute of ego is enmity, hatred. Divine armies are coming to fight egos, to fight enmity and hatred. All people are waiting for this Divine Help to reach them so that they may save themselves from the enmity and hatred of egos. This hatred is an endless ocean; we must stop it here!

If anyone claims he is a man from the sons of Adam (peace be upon him), he must understand this lecture and fight for love among all people, and to defeat enmity and hatred among all nations, and among all servants of Allah Almighty.

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Our Grandshaykh was saying that people may be in one of two conditions: One, the expanded person has an open face, smiling, not solemn or angry.

The second condition is contrary to this. He who is in this condition is angry, sorrowful, and solemn.

Which is lovely for Allah Almighty? The first. Allah likes His servants to be open, expanded, always pleased. If a man is not complaining, if he is smiling under all conditions and carrying only goodness in his heart for others, Allah is pleased with him.

It is the greatest sin, before Allah, to condemn a man without knowledge, without proof, without witnesses. It is 'suizan'—a wrong or bad assumption. You must think all people are good. Then, even if your own sins are great, Allah may forgive you easily. No harm for smiling, expanded persons. All badness coming from stern, angry people.

In dark places, you may find poisonous insects. Though a stern, angry person may do as much worship as all people combined, it is not acceptable. He who has a stern face, he who is not thinking goodness for other people, that person is refused from the Divine Presence.

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Our Grandshaykh was saying, "If a man has troubles from illness, from courts, from poverty, from government—so many troubles—these are punishment for his actions.

"There are two kinds of troubles: One kind comes to Prophets and Awliya. It may be of any kind, but it is not the result of their bad actions. They haven't any bad actions; those troubles come to give them higher degrees.

"The other kind of trouble comes to people for their bad actions, and for the purpose of making them clean. When they have been punished in this world, there is no punishment in the next world for them."

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Our Grandshaykh spoke about the hadith, "The value of actions is according to their difficulties." He said, "The more difficult an action, the more valuable it is. In our times, one who asks to walk on the straight way may find a very heavy load on his shoulders. Therefore, when one walks the straight way under these conditions, under this heavy load, Allah rewards him accordingly."

In these times, for keeping one sunnah, Allah gives the reward of one hundred martyrs. Nowadays, people may stay awake in theaters, in discotheques, in cinemas, and in bars and other such places—very enthusiastic, with such power to stay awake all night! But, if anyone will awaken after midnight to pray two rak'ats, he will feel the weight of the world on his shoulders. So difficult will it be for him to awaken! We can feel this heavy load over our bodies. It is the result of living in a time of darkness among people.

'Futur' is a kind of tiredness. If a man is walking on the straight way, he always feels tired. But, if he is going on the devil's say, he is always finding pleasure, not tired. Understand? As much as you are tired for your worship, you have been given more rewards by Allah Almighty.

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Our Grandshaykh was saying, "If a man is coming into association with Shaykh, or dhikr, or for praying in the masjid, or for a sunnah meeting (Jammat), those persons will be under Divine Protection. Allah's hand is over a Jammat (assembly); if they are meeting for a worship, there will be Divine assistance for those people. Even if a man is ready once in a day for such an assembly, Allah will forgive him, and not leave him with any sins on the Judgment Day.

"There will be Divine Protection from everything, even from wars and bombs, for those who are ready for Jammat, even once in a day. If a man is going to a group that is worshipping according to the advice of the Prophet (peace be upon him), then he will be under the guard of the Prophet (peace be upon him). If they are going to do something according to our Lord's order, they will be under the guard of Allah Almighty."

Our Grandshaykh is giving us good tidings in our time, because we are, nowadays, so weak in our worshipping. So many people are even leaving worship. As much as we are weak, Allah is giving more mercy according to His most beautiful name (known only to Him, and to those who have been given this secret.) This mercy is open for us now in our times; whereas it never was before. Therefore, if during twenty-four hours anyone is ready for an assembly (Jammat), even one, Allah promises to keep that servant from all cruelties, badness, and accidents.

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Rabi'a (may Allah be pleased with her), a great walla, advised us always to ask forgiveness (Astaghfirullah). She said our 'astaghfir' is always in need of another 'astaghfir,' and our Grandshaykh tells us about the reality of 'astaghfir':

"Whenever and wherever a prohibited thing meets you and your nafs want to go after it, you must keep it far away. This is 'astaghfir,' this is the power of 'astaghfir.' When a servant asks pardon from his Lord, his Lord not only cleans him, but

gives him power to stand firmly against prohibited things. All things for the protection of the ummah."

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It is not enough to say, "I am a Muslim." It is not enough to say, "Shahada." You must keep your organs on the way of Iman. You must try and keep your organs far from all actions that are not Muslim; far from haram; far from prohibited things.

When you are looking to a prohibited thing, you are leaving faith. You must quickly ask pardon from your Lord, so that you may return to Islam once again. Rasul-ullah (peace be upon him) says, "Our eyes make zina (adultery)." We have been ordered to carry our organs into the way of Islam. If a man uses his organs in the way of Allah Almighty, he will have real faith, real Islam.

MALAYANI

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'Mayalani' means, 'that which does not concern you.' You must not speak of or act on that which does not concern you. This is the order of the Prophet (peace be upon him), and it is very important in Islam. You must be careful with this point.

Our Grandshaykh told this story to me: "Once, there was a wali who had been given the power to listen to the angels' speaking. One day, that wali was traveling on his horse when he came to a fountain. He stopped there for a rest, and to renew his wudu and make prayers.

"When he dismounted, he removed the reins from his horse and said to it, 'Go, O, my fellow! You may enjoy this fine grass here!'

"Suddenly, that wali heard two angels in discussion. The first angel (the angel on the right-hand side, who writes our good deeds and speech) was saying, 'I will write those words he spoke to his horse, and credit them to his good deeds.'

"No!" said the angel on the left (responsible for recording our bad deeds and speech), 'You can't write this! I must do it.'

"Why?" said the angel on the right, 'Is it a sin, what he said? He spoke only good words to his horse!'

"The angel on the left replied, 'That is true, but you must know that he spoke about a thing that did not concern him. Is there any horse that needs to be told to enjoy grass? Why did he speak? Allah gave him that tongue. He may use it for

useless things (mayalani) or not. But he has been ordered to speak good, or hold his tongue. Is that horse waiting for his words to eat? I must write this deed as a sin!

"All the while the wali had been listening to their conversation. When he heard the words of the angel on the left, he immediately threw himself into sajdah, crying, 'O, my Lord! Forgive me!'"

"When Allah Almighty heard his servant asking like that He said to the left-hand angel, 'Don't write! Leave it for the other angel because My servant is asking forgiveness, and I accept!'"

Now, for what are these conditions placed upon us? If a man takes care with his speech, Allah Almighty gives Divine Wisdoms to his tongue. That person, who keeps his tongue, will speak only truth and right. He cannot say wrong things at that point.

This may seem a simple thing, to take care with one's speaking, but it has such strong wisdom. It is so powerful! To him who intends to keep his tongue only for goodness, and not to speak on that which does not concern him, Allah Almighty promises to give Divine Wisdoms to speak. Then you are not in need to read books to learn. Allah gives you, on your tongue, so many Divine Wisdoms. To speak of that which doesn't concern you makes your Iman weak. When you leave this bad habit, your faith takes more power. You cannot know what concerns you or not, save through your inspirations. Then you may know well what is yours or not.

A murid asked Shaykh Nazim, "How can we know what is true inspiration and what is nafs?"

Maulana answered, "If it is an inspiration, there is never going to be a doubt in your heart. You will find exact satisfaction. But, if it is from your ego, your conscience will not be at rest.

"Also, when something is from Divine Inspiration, it is not going to leave you until you do it. It will come back again and again. Badness and wrong suggestions from nafs and devils will come for awhile, and then go away."

"Often, maybe, you have the right inspiration. But then you say, 'Ah, but if I do it, then such and such may happen; so I'd better not do it,'" the murid continued.

"That is wrong, also," said the Shaykh.

"Also not inspiration?" asked our brother.

"Not inspiration," repeated Maulana, "... That is, the first is inspiration, ordering you to do something. The second

one, coming to destroy it, is from your nafs, from Satan; just from Satan."

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This is an important lesson: Our Grandshaykh was speaking about good character. He asks, "What is the attribute of one who has a good character?"

He is also answering for us; "If a man gives you one thousand dollars, and then another one comes and takes it away; if you act differently in front of each then you haven't good character!

"If you are glad from the first one, and sorry with the second one, it is a sign that you haven't yet reached good character. If a man has good character, it means he has a strong faith in Allah. He believes that everything that comes to him is coming from Allah.

"He is the giver, and He Almighty is also the taker. This is a stronger faith; you must believe this. Allah is the giver, and Allah is the taker. You must know this, and you must believe this. It is the sixth pillar of Iman, and it must be with you.

"Also, our Prophet (peace be upon him) said, 'In the sight of Allah Almighty, the whole world and its treasure is worth only as much as the wing of a mosquito!' So, what about one thousand dollars! If someone gives you the wing of a mosquito is it pleasure for you? And, if someone should take it away are you sorry?

"If a man goes to court against another, it means that the love of this life is yet in his heart, and our Prophet (peace be upon him) says, 'The worst thing for a person is to like this world and its life.'

"How can we love this life! We are imprisoned in this world. We may eat, we may drink, but death is waiting for us. If a man is sentenced to death, how can he have enjoyment? He must be crazy to like a life that has death as its end! A man can take everything in this life—endless treasures, money, palaces, everything—but he has been judged for death. Nothing from this world's treasures can save him from death. You can be like Alexander the Great, but in the end even he surrendered to death.

"Therefore, if a man has good characters, he cannot like this life. His sight must be on eternal life, not this temporary life. *If he is given all the treasures of this world, he is not*

going to be pleased. If whole treasures are taken from him, he will not be sorry."

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My Grandshaykh was describing to me how a real believer must be: "His hand must be open. If your hand is open, maybe someone may put something there. Or, maybe someone who is in need may take from there. Don't have a closed hand. Then, no one may put anything there, nor may anyone take anything. Good character is to have an open hand; something may be put in, something may be taken.

"All problems, all cases in courts, are for this dunya. Good charactered people are not fighting, or making cases for the treasures of this life. This is because they know that all things in this life are temporary; nothing is permanent. In real faith, this dunya is not a goal, or target.

"Real Islam shows believers the real target--love for Allah. And real Islam is never fought for dunya, never for the treasures of this world, never for this life's dragon. Because this life is a real dragon, eating all people and never becoming full.

"This dragon doesn't know kings, presidents, ministers, lords, governors, rich men, commoners; it eats them all, swallows them up! And yet, all people are running after this terrible dragon. Thousands of years have not dulled the hunger of this dragon. It will eat millions of people and ask, 'What? No more? Give me more! More!' All people work for it, and in the end it eats them.

"Therefore, clever is he who is working for his Lord's service. It is he, only, who will be happy and satisfied. Our Prophet (peace be upon him) called people to their Lord and not after that dragon. But people don't like to hear this, and run instead after that dragon. They are tired. No rest for them.

"Therefore, none of the Prophets is fighting for this life. They are fighting to save people from this life's dragon."

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Our Grandshaykh was saying, "There is a method which is necessary for everyone to keep. What is that method? First, everyone must know where he is looking, and for what he is looking. Is he looking for his ego's pleasure, or looking for his Lord's pleasure? He must distinguish between the two. If he

is looking for his Lord's pleasure, he may look. If he is looking for his ego's pleasure, no permission, no good.

"Second, you must know, when you are speaking, if it is for your ego's pleasure or for your Lord's pleasure. You must know what you are going to speak. If you don't know, don't speak! You must know that when you speak it will be written by either the angel on the right or the angel on the left. If you know that what you say will be written by the angel on the right (good), you may speak or not. If a man is in court, he will be very careful with his words. One word may cause judgment against him, or one word may save him. We must be careful like this.

"Third, we must be careful with our listening. We must know to whom we are listening. If he is going to speak for his Lord's pleasure, we must listen to him. But, if he is going to speak on his ego's behalf, it is not good to listen. Perhaps you may hear some words, along your life, that will stay in your memory and give you harm, and it may be that you cannot forget them. Some words are dangerous for listening. You may eat something that is no good for you; yet, you can put your finger in your mouth and take it out. But, you cannot remove bad words from your ears. Therefore, you must be very careful listening."

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"What is the biggest dragon, swallowing all our good actions?" asks our Grandshaykh. "What is the biggest dragon, eating all our worshipping?"

He is answering for us: "Everyone, when he is a baby, takes the breast of his mother. Also, there is the pacifier given to babies to keep them from putting their thumb in their mouth. This is a bad habit.

"And so, from childhood up to fifteen years he may take many bad habits. Unfortunately, if he cannot stop them when he reaches the age of maturity, those bad habits will destroy all the goodness he may do. This is the worst terrible dragon for everyone.

"Therefore, we must fight to leave our childhood's bad habits. You may be ninety-years-old, and yet, if you cannot leave those bad habits, you will be a child. Before reaching maturity, we are too much like animals, because we haven't responsibility. When we reach the age of our mind's perfection,

we become responsible. It is the first level of perfection for people. Then, you must become perfect in your actions also.”

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If a man asks to keep deep knowledge and Divine Wisdom (Hikma), he must do three things: First, he must not walk without wudu, nor must he touch any book without wudu. Second, he must use a miswak (tooth stick). And, third, he must keep the midnight salat (Tahajj'ud).

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Our Grandshaykh was saying, “What is the biggest sin in the sight of Allah? Allah Almighty created mankind so honorable, and respectful, and lovely to Him Almighty. And then He gave all mankind to Muhammad (peace be upon him) as a trust. All nations have been given to Muhammad (peace be upon him) on the Day of Promise. Therefore, *the greatest sin in the sight of Allah is to search out everyone's faults.*

“Our Prophet (peace be upon him) says, ‘Happiness is for him who is occupied with correcting his own faults, for it keeps him from looking to another's faults.’ Clear? It is a very big sin to look to others' faults, and to try to harm people. All troubles, all unsolvable problems, come after looking to another's faults. A bad habit, indeed!

“He who forgets his own faults,” continues our Grandshaykh, “and looks after other people's faults, is like a man who says, ‘I am God!’ To be without fault is only for God, not man. All people must have some faults, some more than others.”

“Even Prophets?” asked a brother.

Manulana answered, “They have been protected (Ma'sum).”

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Our Grandshaykh says that each person, each servant of Allah Almighty, has two positions or duties: One toward their Lord, and one toward other people.

Toward Allah Almighty, his duty is to be Allah's sincere servant, without asking any reward in this world, or in the next world.

Toward other people we shall, first, love all Allah's servants.

We must keep, in our hearts, love for them without making any difference between them. Allah created His servants clean; they are originally lovely.

You like your children, for example, even if they do wrong things. Allah Almighty created all people originally clean from all badness and evils, and from all kafir. Their essence is clean – always. Like a ring that falls into the toilet. You may take it out and wash it, and it will be clean again. The essence of mankind is endlessly precious—the most precious thing in the sight of Allah. Therefore, we like all people because they are the servants of our Lord, and they are our Lord's creation. That is our first obligation to other people.

Our second obligation, or duty, to people is to help them as much as we can. We must help everyone, according to our Prophet's Hadith, ‘Help all people, both oppressor and oppressed!’

When our Prophet (peace be upon him) said that, his sahabas asked, “How can we help oppressors!”

Replied the Prophet (peace be upon him), “By catching his hand to prevent him from oppressing!”

Our third obligation toward other people is to think good of everyone. We must not think bad thoughts about people.

These three characters or attitudes toward others, to love them, to help them, and to think good of them, are wanted from all believers, in fact from all people. They are the sign of high character, acceptable in the sight of our Lord. Without them, no one can be acceptable in the sight of his Lord. When a person keeps these obligations, he will be rewarded by his Lord in that all people will love him, help him, and respect him. This is the secret of success in our lives, and the meaning of the hadith, “A malukum um malukum” (You will be dealt with according to your actions). So many sins may be forgiven by keeping this. *Never harm anyone with your hand or with your tongue!*

All non-Muslims living within Islamic communities have the same rights as Muslims. Our Prophet (peace be upon him) says: “Anyone harming a protected servant is harming me!” As we understand this saying so we must keep it. Our Lord's pleasure is with this character.

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Our Grandshaykh says, “We must be careful to take knowledge from everything.” If a man can take wisdom from every

event, then he will be most strong in his faith in his Lord. It gives him more power for Divine Knowledge. He may take knowledge even from a donkey's braying!

You must look to take a secret wisdom from all things. You can find, in each thing, such knowledge as you won't find in another thing. Islam says, "Look deeply for all things." It is an order from Allah.

We are not animals. Sheep look, . . . but, if we see the way sheep do, then we are sheep also! Therefore, Allah orders us to look deeply into each thing, into each event, to find a secret wisdom that gives it value. And, our Grandshaykh says, "If you look deeply, you will taste!"

Allah Almighty will give a reward to European people for the discoveries and inventions they have made from looking deeply into things.

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Our Grandshaykh says, "Everything that is going to happen in this life has a fixed time. There is, for every event that will happen in this life, an appointed hour. If you ask for an event to happen before its appointed time, you cannot find it. If you ask for it to be delayed, it is impossible also. Not before—not after. Everything must be at that appointed time."

What is the benefit to know this point? If we know that all events will come in their appointed time, we will be at rest, patient; and patience shows the perfection of man. As much as you are patient, you are perfect; you have strong Iman.

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Consultation has been ordered. It is not right to do something without consultation. If you are going to consult, it must be with a man in whom you have trust.

It is not consultation to come to a man and say, "I am doing something now, I am going somewhere now; what do you say?" It is not right for a man to come to a person and say, "O, my Shaykh! O, my Master! I intend to travel, I've got my ticket. What do you say about my traveling?" This is not consultation. I shall tell you, "Very good. No worry."

Before doing anything, you will ask, "O, my Master! I intend traveling. How do you see it? Is it all right or not?"

Then, as you are advised you must do, you must listen. This is consultation.

You must bring the whole cloth to the master saying, "Please cut; as you like." This is consultation. Then he cuts. You must not bring cut cloth. So many people say, "We consulted!" but, in the end, finally coming no good. "How can this be? I consulted with my Shaykh, and I went. What happened to me?"

You must be careful, especially about three things: marriage, divorce, and traveling. You must ask your Shaykh about these three important points!

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Our Grandshaykh says, "Good is in that which happens. A servant must be thankful to his Lord for His favors.

"Allah Almighty sometimes gives good tidings to people, promising Paradise to people, and sometimes He makes them fear His punishment. You will not give thanks to your Lord until you believe that whatever happens is a favor from Allah Almighty. If you don't know that it is a favor from Allah Almighty, you are not thanking your Lord."

This recognition is the beginning of thanks to Allah Almighty. No recognition, no thanking Allah. For example, you have a wife. You must say, "O, my Lord! Thanks to You for my wife. You gave me a queen of beauty! I am so pleased! I am so proud of my wife, O, my Lord!" Can you say this? This is recognition of a favor from Allah Almighty. If a man complains about his wife, how can he be thankful to his Lord for His favor?

Again, recognition is the first step for thanking Allah Almighty. If a man complains of anything, how can he be thankful to his Lord? It is impossible. Therefore, you must say, "My wife is the most excellent one among all ladies! She is sweeter to me than anyone!" This is because halal is sweet. Haram is poison. Other ladies, they are haram; but your wife is halal to you. Therefore, she is sweet to you and others are bitter to you.

If a man does not recognize a favor, then Allah takes it from him. If this happens to you, then you will understand! Then you will know it was a favor!

Once upon a time, some people were on board a ship. The servant of that ship was new to the job. It was the first time he was on a ship, and the first time, also, that he had seen the ocean.

As soon as the ship set sail that servant became seized with fear and began to cry out in a very loud voice. He kept screaming at the top of his lungs and no one could make him stop.

There was also on board a certain wise man. When he heard that servant crying, he said to some of the other passengers, "Take that man and throw him overboard!" So, they pushed him into the sea.

Immediately the servant swam back to the ship and climbed up the side. The passengers pulled him back on board. Now that servant sat in silence. He had learned that the ship was a favor!

Therefore, so many favors may go unrecognized by people. But, when it is taken away, they will cry, "Oooo!" If a man doesn't give thanks for favors, favors will go, and troubles will come in their place.

Our Grandshaykh says that among the biggest favors from Allah is that when two brothers (ikhwan), friends, are sitting together, in association for the sake of Allah. All the worship they could make individually for two thousand years would not equal the reward that Allah Almighty gives for that association! Because, through that association Divine Care will come. Also, one of the greatest favors from Allah Almighty to His servants is for them to be witnesses to His Unity. To say, "La illaha ill'Allah Muhammadin Rasul-ullah!" is one of the greatest favors from Allah to His servants. If a man speaks this, Allah cleans him of all his sins up to that time!

This secret word "La illaha ill'Allah Muhammadin Rasul-ullah" keeps whoever speaks it from humiliation, here and hereafter. No humiliation for those who are saying, "Ashadu anla illaha ill'Allah, wa Ashadu anna Muhammadin abduhu wa Rasuluhu!" also. Therefore, to speak with this Holy word is the biggest favor from Allah to His servants. If a man knows "La illaha ill'Allah Muhammadin Rasul-ullah" exactly, then it is impossible for him to waste his time without benefit, without saying that Holy word.

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On the verse, "No one is to be forced for anything in Islam": Allah says after this, "Goodness and badness are clear. They are no secret. They are known by everyone. You cannot find a man who has even an average mind who cannot separate the two. Therefore, Allah says, "Leave them! No need to force a man into goodness. He can distinguish it for himself."

If a man hasn't the mind to be able to distinguish good from

bad, he has no responsibility. But, if a man knows goodness and badness, he has the responsibility to choose goodness and to leave badness.

A brother asked, "How does this relate to fard in Islam?"

Maulana answered, "Islam came to make goodness all over the world, and also to take badness from the world."

"Allah could do that if He wanted," the disciple insisted.

"Yes," answered the Shaykh. "He has that power. But, He doesn't force people. He asks them to do good with their own wills, as they grow in understanding. It does not mean that you force a man if he has rabies, for example, when you catch him and restrain him for an injection. We use that force for his own good. If we leave him free, he will die or he may be dangerous to others. Therefore, when we use that force on him, it does not mean that we are using that force on him to make his will useless. No, we are using that force for his own good.

"Therefore, when Allah says no people should be forced to do anything because they can distinguish between good and bad for themselves, it doesn't mean that we cannot sometimes use force to restrain them from doing badness, from causing harm to themselves and others. For their own benefit, we are doing it. Our Prophet (peace be upon him) said, 'You must help people—cruel people also.' How shall we help a cruel person? By catching his hand, to prevent him from harming others. This is not using force to make goodness; this is using force to prevent badness only.

"If we have a field for keeping sheep, or for making a garden, we must kill the snakes and poisonous insects first. Shariah always uses force to prevent badness. Not all people have the same level of willpower. Some people can control themselves to prevent their falling into bad ways, while others are weak. They need help. They cannot, by themselves, protect themselves against falling into bad ways. We must help them, and help needs force sometimes. We are using force to help people.

"Force may be used for goodness or badness. Therefore, Shariah says that if you can prevent a person, with your hand, from falling into badness, you must catch him. Or, if you can stop him with your speech, you must speak. Finally, if you cannot stop him, with your hand or with your speaking, you must pray for him: 'O, my Lord! Keep him from falling into bad ways!'

"No force may be used on Christians and Jews for becoming Muslims. They are able to distinguish between a true man and a liar; therefore, it is useless to force them to be Muslims. They

are free to think as they please, until the time for thinking is ended with the return of Jesus (peace be upon him). Then, he will judge among them."

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Our Grandshaykh was saying about keeping our Iman, "We must keep, very carefully, the light of faith because enemies are trying to take away that light. Faith is the light of Allah given to His servants. Therefore, everyone must be very careful to guard against those enemies who are trying to extinguish the light of Iman.

"There are three entrances by which those enemies try to extinguish the light of Iman. You must put guards at those three doors in your body. What could be a more precious treasure to guard than Iman? If Allah sees His servant dutifully guarding His precious favor, He Almighty looks with pleasure on that servant. And, when Allah Almighty looks to His servant with pleasure, He sends Divine favors, Divine mercy, Divine pleasure to that servant's heart. And, whoever guards those three doors carefully, will be granted the wisdom of all one hundred four Holy books, because he is a trustworthy person.

"All Prophets came to teach people how to protect those three doors. Also, all tariqats, all Grandshaykhs, are trying; with exercises, with training, wirts, khalwa; to make their murids keep those three doors carefully.

"The first door, or entrance, that is vulnerable to attack by devils who try to extinguish the light of Iman, is the eyes. A man may reach the highest degree of Iman when suddenly, through prohibited looking (the most attractive thing is women), his Iman is gone. We are very easily taken and our Iman extinguished through our eyes.

"The second door is our mouth, our tongue. Quickly, devils catch us by our tongues, enter and extinguish our Iman. You must be very careful with your speech. You must be like a man on trial. In a court everything may turn on a single word. In reality, we will be in court on the Judgment Day before the Judge of Judges, Allah Almighty.

"The third door is the ears, and other organs. You must not let them be used by devils, for their purposes. You must keep your organs, so that devils and Satan cannot use them as they like. Concerning the ears, there are two ways to use them:

hearing and listening. You may *hear* anything, *but, only if you want, if you will it, must you listen*. Allah Almighty says that when Quran is being read, you must listen to it. On the other hand, you may hear a donkey's braying but you are not listening. You may hear some bad speech but you are not listening. When you are listening, you have responsibility. But, if you are only hearing, there is no responsibility for you.

"It is the same for the eyes. You may see everything. But, when you look, you have responsibility for that looking. That means every believer, every Muslim must consider the reasons for his actions and know the consequences. He must know his purposes; heedlessness is prohibited in Islam. If you are looking at a lady; What is your purpose? Why are you looking? For your ego!

"Allah Almighty teaches every believer. And, every believer knows what is good for him, or what is bad. Your conscience always gives you exact signs on goodness and badness, but every time your conscience points you toward goodness, your ego says, 'No!', because its pleasure is with badness. This is an important lesson. If you keep this, Allah Almighty promises to teach you all the knowledge of Holy books. If you cannot protect these three doors, then, sometimes, enemies will come and extinguish the light of your Iman."

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"It is a good manner," says our Grandshaykh, "not to argue with people. If you know you are on the right way, don't argue.

"Arguing extinguishes Iman. If you are right, and you are arguing with someone who is wrong, perhaps he will say some wrong thing that may be harmful to you. For example, if a man calls you a kafir, you must not argue. 'No! I am not kafir!' Instead, you must agree with him, in this manner: 'Yes! You are right! My nafs' bad habits *are* kafir!'

"All people are making arguments now. Each one imagines himself to be the most clever of people. He likes his word to be listened to and respected in every place. All enmity grows from this, from arguing. Therefore, you must say in response to any argument, 'Yes, it is as you say. My ego is responsible for what you disapprove of in me. It is very bad. But, I am not in agreement with my ego. I am trying to keep its bad habits away from me, to improve my character. O, my brother! If you are right in

your argument, may Allah correct me. And, if you are wrong, O, my brother, may Allah forgive you and make you right.”

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“If a man tells you a lie,” asks our Grandshaykh, “what will be your position? You must not say, ‘No! That isn’t true.’ You must not refuse his words. This is a high character and good manners.

“You may tell him, ‘Oh? Is it so?’ Maybe, in your sight his statement has no reality, but you must be gentle. We have not been ordered to refuse people, but to make them more pleased. We are living in a time when people may say anything and everything; you must be patient with them, and excuse them, always without fighting. You must know that people are ill in their egos. If you are claiming to be doctors, you must excuse them. If you are on the way of prophets, you must help them and be tolerant of them. This is the highest degree of good manners.”

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Our Grandshaykh was making an important point for everyone: “Everyone must know the value of himself. If a man has no self-respect, gives himself no value, then he will not give another person’s life any value either. For example, if a doctor knows his body’s value, how will he be toward the bodies of his patients? He who is ignorant of himself will be more ignorant of others!

“We have been ordered to keep our bodies excellent throughout our lives. You must not load your body with more than its capability; nor will you load others in that way. Our bodies are ‘amana,’ a trust from our Lord. On the Judgment Day we will be asked, first, how we kept our bodies. All Holy books are in agreement on this point, namely that we must keep our bodies in very good condition, not doing anything that gives harm to them. You must not misuse your body. No poisons!

“In our time, people find their bodies very cheap. Therefore, Islam is making health first in all things. Everyone, especially those on top stations, must keep people very carefully so that they may not harm each other. If they are saying, ‘I am free to do as I like!’; they may go to the tops of mountains, and to the jungle! When you live with other people, you must keep yourself healthy, keep your self-value and self-respect. Keep this respect, and others may respect you.

“Real religions all fight badness. They never agree with any bad characters. Muhammad (peace be upon him), the last Prophet, clearly said, ‘I came just to complete good characters.’”

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Our Grandshaykh is speaking about Mahdi, the keeper of this time (peace be upon him). Grandshaykh was sitting in Mahdi’s assembly, and listening to his words: “O, my brother, Shaykh Abdullah!” he said. “In our time, the sign of good character, and the highest degree of Jihad al’Akbar (fighting with your ego), is to carry other people’s bad characters, to bear with them, and to tolerate them. As much as we have patience with people, forbearance, we have good character. It is the sign of good character in our time.”

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My Grandshaykh was wondering one day, “O, Nazim Effendi! People are passing through so much difficulty in this life when, in reality, it is so easy! It is too simple! Why are men making it so difficult?”

Before one hundred years ago, life was so simple in comparison with today, and people were much happier. Now, inventions and discoveries are increasing, and life is more and more complicated. Also, every day troubles and problems are increasing. Therefore, we must try to make this life more simple. If we don’t do this, our troubles and difficulties will be never-ending.

Before, there were ten drugs and ten illnesses. Now, perhaps there are one hundred thousand drugs, and a like number of afflictions as well! We must simplify; move back into harmony with Nature. Mother Nature embraces us. Therefore, our Prophet (peace be upon him) foretold a miracle in his hadiths. Saying, “O, my people! There will come a time on you! . . .,” he went on to describe all the troubles that will appear on the world as the last day approaches. Then he advised his nation about who would be saved from all troubles; he who took his sheep and went to the tops of mountains. This hadith is a sign for us to return to nature and the simple life.

Allah originally made life so easy, but now we make it so difficult. This is a punishment for us now. All economic problems come after this point. One hundred years ago a man

could have one suit of clothes for two, perhaps three, years. Now, his ego orders him to change it perhaps every fifteen days, every week, perhaps morning and evening!

Our Prophet (peace be upon him) says, "The contented man is the richest man." If you are running after things, you are poor. Allah likes his servants to live with pleasure, not solemn and sad, because solemn and sad are signs of dissatisfaction with your Lord. If a man is pleased and satisfied, it is a sign that he is pleased and satisfied with his Lord. Satisfaction makes even a short life happy, but dissatisfaction makes a short life very, very long—a destroying burden. Be pleased with your Lord, and everything in this life will be enjoyable for you.

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Our Grandshaykh was saying, "What is one important thing, making our lives more difficult? If a man never accepts any rule except his own, he is not going to save himself from trouble. Everyone who says, 'My rule is excellent. I am not in need to ask anyone,' is not going to save himself from trouble.

"A man may plan something. He may regard that plan as excellent, and, so thinking, he will not consult with anyone. That man will always be in trouble, throughout his life. Be humble, so that you are able to consult with other people. Their observation may be better than yours. Perhaps they may see an easier, better way for you. But, if you never ask other people, you will be always in trouble.

"Allah Almighty orders His servants, 'Ask for everything--from authorized people.' When people don't do this, it is another source of trouble for them. Therefore, you must ask someone who knows well the matter that is before you. There are specialists for everything. If a man is going to lose his eye, he is not going to go to a heart specialist!

"If you don't have advisors, you will have endless trouble. As we are in need of advisors for this life's problems, we are more in need of advisors for our spiritual, or Heavenly progress so that we may know the shortest, safest way to our Heavenly stations. If you don't take advisors for your Heavenly life, you cannot reach your Heavenly, spiritual station. Our Heavenly advisors are, first of all, Prophets (peace be upon them all). Next come their spiritual heirs, the Awliya, or Saints (may Allah be pleased with them all).

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Allah Almighty orders His servants, when they come for prayer, to put on their ornaments. What does this mean? We must look to the Prophet's sunnah, for he knows, more than any other man, how one should be for praying. He stood for prayer in the Divine Presence exactly as his Lord ordered him, and the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "O, my nation! Pray as you see me pray!"

The Prophet (peace be upon him) never prayed without a turban. Only if he didn't have one (because it was being washed, for example, or sometimes when he prayed alone) did he pray without a turban. But he says, "Always pray with turban."

A turban is the ornament of man for praying. On the Prophet's Night Journey did he go without a turban? No, he went with turban! Gabriel came to him wearing a turban; all angels are coming with turbans. Turban is the perfect ornament for praying.

So, if you have no excuse, you must use turbans. We must not discount its importance. I never saw our Grandshaykh praying without a turban. Our Prophet (peace be upon him) says, "If a man prays with ammama (turban), Allah will reward him with ten-thousand goodnesses." And, in our time, as it is a famous sunnah, he who uses turban is given the reward of one hundred martyrs! This is because now, even Muslims are fighting against the turban. They wish to lose it, like the Saudis, so that no one will wear it. But, our Prophet (peace be upon him) says, "He who keeps my sunnah, in the last days, will be given the reward of one hundred martyrs."

But people are killing the sunnah. Devils are fighting turbans now because it is a sign of Islam. No fighting for beards, because everyone can grow his beard. No problem for beards. In every religion, in every way of life, people can grow beards. But most important is the turban! Devils are fighting to make men lose it. Allah is giving to my heart to make all, from east to west, wear turbans.

When a devil looks at a man with a turban, Satan says to him, "This is the Prophet's soldier, you must fight him!"

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You are asking for Divine Powers, to approach the Divine Presence. Our Grandshaykh has such powers. Once, he said to me, "O, Nazim Effendi! We have such miraculous powers; we are power stations! From ants to elephants, from mankind to angels, from earth to Heavens, Jinn and men, everyone!

"We are power stations. To any person who is asking for that power to reach his destination, we shall give. We are ready; waiting for those who come, asking to travel to Heaven. We know what he needs, though he himself may not, and according to his desire, according to his capability, we give. He may feel it or not; it doesn't matter!

"There is a mill for making flour. Wheat is put between the stones for grinding. When the grinding is finished -flour! Don't be worried for yourself. The mill will not cease functioning. Divine help will come to your heart, like drops or like a torrent.

"You do not need to ask with your tongue. We are not looking to your speech, but we are looking to your heart's action. It is all right; that Divine help is falling on your heart, more and more. You must not ask with your tongue, 'I am in need!' There is no value in that. We are looking at your nature's need. If you are in need, we will know.

"Increase your need—that is important! Every time you are in action, this power increases. Our Prophet (peace be upon him) says, 'From heart to heart, there are secret ways.' Especially from the hearts of Awliya to their followers. This relationship is strong, bringing people all together.

"Therefore, according to your love for Awliya, they will give you more power. This is the way. When you are showing love, respect, and charity toward Awliya, they also return to you more than your love, more than your respect, and more than your charity.

"Allah is the source, the fountain. No one can approach Niagara Falls to drink; but you may drink from a cup (Awliya) and say, 'I am drinking from Niagara!' Wahabis say that all people are the same; no difference among men. They are not accepting that Awliya have extraordinary powers. You may take two wires; one, you put into an electrical outlet; the other, no. They look the same, but touch them and you will feel the difference! Yes, all people are the same; but some of them are connected with Divine Powers. You cannot know by sight alone.

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Our Grandshaykh was telling us about Abu Bakr as-Siddiq (may Allah be pleased with him), who said, "Before I became Muslim, I kept my money in my hands very firmly. I feared it would be finished if I spent it. But, after my Islam, I opened

my hand with giving, and, as much as I am giving, my money is not going to run out!"

This is the meaning of the Quranic verse, "O, My people! As much as you give in charity, I am giving better, exchanging your charity with My Charity!" Therefore, don't be afraid. If you are giving for the sake of Allah, He will give to you. Sayid-dina Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him), before he became Muslim, was afraid to spend all his money. But, when he believed Allah's words, he gave and gave, and there was no end to his money and property.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "It is impossible to decrease the money of a man who gives in charity." And, our Grandshaykh was saying, "Allah Almighty sometimes is trying His people. Prophets have been tried, and Awliya have been tried; because each trial gives them higher degrees. Once, Abu Bakr as-Siddiq (may Allah be pleased with him) gave all his money and things away. He didn't even have anything left to wear, so he wrapped a straw mat around himself. But, after that trial was finished, more and more came, also.

"O, believer! Do you think a well will run dry from your drawing? When Allah tried Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him), and saw that he didn't change his belief when hardship came, it meant that he passed the examination. When that happens, Allah Almighty opens His oceans of mercy to that servant."

Allah tried even His beloved Muhammad (peace be upon him). When his sahabas tied one stone on their stomachs for hunger, the Prophet tied two stones. When his belief remained unchanged, the examination was finished. No more trials came to him.

What is the wisdom of Allah trying His servants? He is trying His servants to see if they see that all things come from Him Almighty. He is giving, and He is stopping. He is teaching patience. He says, "Good tidings for My patient servants!"

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Our Grandshaykh says, "You must not be worried about your sustenance, because for everyone living on this world there are chains of sustenance coming down. As much as you will cut from that chain, more will come down. If you are cutting a little, little will also come. If you are generously cutting, it will generously come. If it is finished for you, you may ask.

"If something is given to you, without your asking, it is halal, good for you. You must not refuse it. It is not good manners to refuse a person. That person is giving to you with his inspirations, and if you refuse, he will be ashamed, broken. You must take it and thank him, pray for him. If you are not in need, you may keep it aside for giving to someone who is in need later on.

"If you are a traveler and someone asks you if you are in need you must reply, 'As you like' or 'As you know.' Then, as they offer, you must accept. This is a good manner—to place consideration for your plight on his conscience. He may give, or not; but in Islam, the best manner is 'Don't ask!' This manner is true for the giver as well as the receiver. Don't wait to find out if he is in need. Your inspiration and your conscience will cause you to give freely, but Satan will come to you and say, 'You must ask, and then give. Perhaps he is not in need.' Then, you will not be so generous. Give!"

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Our Grandshaykh says, "Don't be afraid of death. This is the sign of Iman. To be fearful of dying is the sign of no Iman. Bravery comes from the power of our faith. As our Iman increases, fear of death recedes, and bravery grows. There is no fear of death for a mu'min. One who fears death will try to escape it, whereas a believer will be brave, hoping to meet his Lord.

"Without bravery in the face of death, Islam cannot spread on the world. Without this faith and courage, people will hide in their houses. Believers need to appear all over this world, in order to put the signs of Haqq (rightness) there.

"The fear of death prevents mu'min from many good actions, especially from fighting for the sake of Allah, and for the sake of goodness, justice, and rightness. When believers show fear of death, it encourages bad people and devils to more cruelty. Dogs have a character; if they feel you are afraid of them, they will attack you. But, if they feel that you are not afraid of them, they will run to escape from you. Devils are this way. If believers and good people don't fear devils, then those devils will be afraid. Otherwise, it will be the reverse; if we are afraid, then they will be brave toward us. Therefore, in Islam, it has been ordered not to be afraid of death."

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We know that Satan is the first, and most dangerous enemy for us. He is always trying to destroy our Iman, always renewing his attacks on believers. Our Grandshaykh said, "The first step of Satan to destroy our Iman is to make us in doubt our sustenance. The devil says to us, 'What are you doing? How are you going to live? Where is your job? Where is your money?'"

"People are of two kinds, One kind works for this life and this world. The other kind is working for his Lord. The first kind becomes tired with his working. The second kind, who are working for their Lord, are not tiring themselves working for this world; Allah makes other work for them.

"When Allah Almighty created all our souls, He made an exhibition of all the kinds of jobs that people could do; every occupation. Then, He ordered each person to choose one of them for their life and every person chose one.

"After the last person had made his choice, there remained one group of people who had waited without choosing. Allah asked them, 'Why haven't you chosen?' They replied, 'O, our Lord! We choose only your service! No occupation for us but that!'

"Allah Almighty was so pleased, and He addressed them, 'O, My servants! You chose My service; therefore, I made all those other people servants to you!' Then, He ordered this dunya, 'Serve My servants!'

"Satan attacks believers, making doubt come into their hearts about their sustenance so that they will leave their Lord's service and pursue the things of this world. Satan makes all people, especially Muslims, think deeply about their future, about their welfare, about their children's future. Why? Allah doesn't ask us for tomorrow's worship, only today's, only what is due now. Why are we asking Allah for tomorrow's sustenance?

"We must have faith in Allah to provide for our needs. 'Am I not your Provider?' says our Lord. 'Do you not trust in Me, O, My servant?'

"New day, new sustenance. Our Prophet (peace be upon him) says, 'Sustenance is provided for everyone, throughout his life. Each man must complete his share before he dies. Until he finishes what is written for him, what is allotted for him, he will not die.'

"We must take a lesson from the pets of men. Look how much they trust their owners for food. In European countries, cats and dogs are kings. Did you ever see a cat or a dog working? They trust their owners, who feed them without expecting

work in return. Have we reached this level of trust to our Lord? Allah says, 'You must not trust your own powers, your minds, businesses, money, etc. You must trust Me!' It is Satan who tells us the opposite."

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Our Grandshaykh was saying, "What are the attributes of Awliya? Anyone who believes in Allah and eternal life, and Holy Books, and Allah's messengers, and Paradise and Hell, and the Last Day, that person is stepping on the way to the first station of wilaya, to be a Saint.

"That belief is the first step toward wilayat. It is our will to begin, but to reach that goal we need Divine Help. For this reason, the Prophet (peace be upon him) always asked for Divine Help, and therefore, we too must not trust our own powers, but must ask and trust our Lord's Help. That is most important for everyone, especially those who are traveling for the sake of Allah Almighty.

"What is a Wali's attribute? What is his belief's power? How is his belief in his Lord? It is like this: If Allah Almighty covered all the sky with an iron cover and all the earth with rock, and that Wali is ordered to provide sustenance for all people, he will not worry. His belief is so strong in Allah the Provider (Razzaq). If any doubt comes to his heart, he is thrown out of Sainthood!

"Allah is Lord of the universe, and He may order us to do anything at any time. We must always be ready to accept those orders. Ordering is for Allah. To keep His orders with no objections is for his servants. When Allah Almighty orders, that order must be kept. When Allah ordered the angels to make sajdah, Iblis refused, and Gabriel made sajdah twice in his place!"

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Our Grandshaykh said, "When does the power of our faith appear? When an unlovely thing happens to you, and you remain unchanged, firm in your faith, your Iman is real. If you can bear with those undesired things, the power of your faith will appear. Without trial, you cannot say that you have real power of faith.

"When Abraham (peace be upon him) was about to be thrown into the fire, the angels wept for him. They appealed to Allah for permission to help him. Allah agreed and sent

Gabrael down on behalf of all the angels to help Abraham (peace be upon him), but only on the condition that Abraham (peace be upon him) must first ask for that help.

"So, Gabriel came to Abraham (peace be upon him) and asked, 'O, Ibrahim! Do you need help? I am ready for that!'

"Abraham (peace be upon him) replied, 'O, Gabriel! From you I need nothing. Only from my Lord!'

"Then you must ask your Lord for help!' Gabriel said again.

"And, Abraham (peace be upon him) replied again, 'It is enough that He knows I am here.'

"This is real power of faith, unchanging in the face of trials. This is the target. We must continue, until we are like Abraham (peace be upon him). You may, throughout your life, be in so many heavy positions. You must not melt; you must be solid! Our life's problems and troubles are so many. According to the power of our Iman, our faith, we can stand up to them. You may see some people killing themselves in the face of their troubles. When people are faced with great events, strong faith keeps them from panic."

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Our Grandshaykh said that rebellion against our Lord is the main reason for the prevention of His favors to us. If you understand this, you will always be in good condition, enjoyment, and happiness.

Sayyidina Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) said, "If a man fears Allah Almighty, he will live a happy life, and travel over the whole world safely." No problem for that person, and no difficulties.

So many people, on account of their rebellion to their Lord, are lying in hospitals and prisons. We must be, instead, obedient to our Lord's will. When confronted with a great event that we cannot face, we must leave it to Allah's will, to Allah's power, saying, "La hawla walla qu'watta illah billah ill-aliyul'Azeem." (No power or strength except by Allah the Highest, the Most Great One.) We can't change anything, but He has the might to change everything as He likes.

This is an excellent good manner, and a very lovely attitude or attribute for a servant toward his Lord. If you are faced with a heavy happening, or a great event that you can't carry, that you cannot bear, you must say, "O, my Lord! La hawla walla qu'watta illah billah ill-aliyul'Azeem! You Almighty can carry

it. You, alone, can change it!" Only in this way can you bear some things. You cannot carry them with your own powers, but must transfer the load to your Lord.

All problems of servants can be easily solved in this manner, with this saying. It is the sign of perfect obedience to your Lord and according to our Prophet (peace be upon him), "La hawla walla qu'watta illah billah ill-Aliyul'Azeem" is a treasure from Paradise. The servant with this word is the most powerful one in the whole world, and, in our tariqat, we have been ordered to repeat it one hundred times in a day. With it a servant can bear everything in this world; as much as even mountains can bear!

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For what reason are we learning? For what reason are we taking knowledge? What are Holy Books for? Do you not know that Satan knows all Holy Books? So many religious people are reading Holy Books and trying to take more and more knowledge.

I heard today about a contest in Jerusalem among young people, to see who is the most knowledgeable of their Holy Books. For what? It is more important to know the reason for learning. Iblis, as we said before, knows all Holy Books. If it were enough merely to have this knowledge in order to be saved, then Iblis would also have reached that point!

Therefore, we must understand that our target, or aim, is not to possess so much knowledge. Holy Books are lights from Allah Almighty to His servants. You must take that light in your hands, and you must go through darkness until you reach your realities in the Divine Presence. That knowledge is Shariah, and acting according to that knowledge is the meaning of tariqat- to go on toward your Heavenly positions.

The meaning of tariqat is 'way,' and when you enter this 'way' and go on, you will reach your Divine Positions in the Divine Presence. They are the realities of mankind, of human nature. It is the recognition of ourselves and our realities. Everything has a reality, and when a man recognizes himself, he may know his Lord.

Our realities are in the Divine Presence, but we separated and came into this world. As of yet, there is no connection between ourselves and our realities in the Divine Presence. All Prophets (peace be upon them all) and all Awliya (may Allah

be pleased with all of them) came to make that connection for us, as they themselves are so connected. Therefore, Allah Almighty ordered His servants to follow one of those Prophets and Awliya, so that we may also become connected to our realities.

"Follow in the path of him who has turned to Me with love." Thus, Allah Almighty describes the personality of those who are connected with their Divine Stations: "... who turned to Us with love."